SPECIAL ISSUE

4 CREATIVITY TIPS FROM EINSTEIN P.60

FEEL SMART AGAIN

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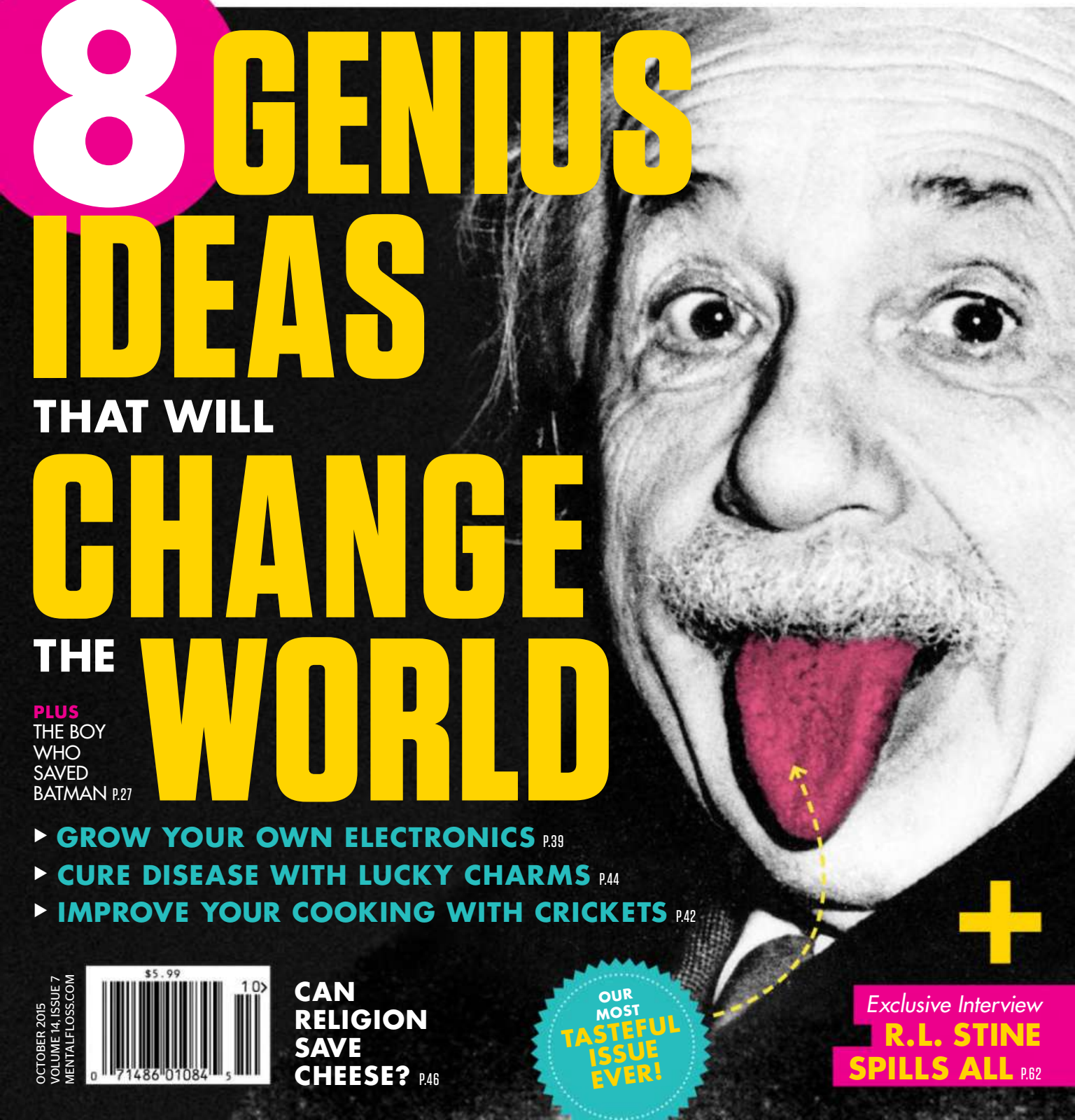
8 GENIUS IDEAS THAT WILL CHANGE THE WORLD



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OUR MOST TASTEFUL ISSUE EVER!

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CAN RELIGION SAVE CHEESE? P.46

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ILLUSTRATION BY LUC MELANSON (PUPPET). ANDY SMITH (DELICATESSEN). PHOTOGRAPHY BY LIZ BARCLAY (DIM SUM). PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID WILLIAMS (PIZZA). ALAMY (BOX). CORBIS (PANDA). ISTOCK (CONFETTI. HAUNTED HOUSE). COURTESY SCHOLASTIC (GOOSEBUMPS)

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Feel-Good Letter of the Month

I've been catching up on my *mental_floss* and saw a letter about how one issue helped a high school English teacher's reluctant student. I can't agree more. The colorful layout and bite-size chunks appeal to just the type of student that I (also a high school English teacher) struggle to reach. I often cut things out to post in my room and share with my students.

—DAVID FITZPATRICK

WHY DO AIRLINES SERVE PEANUTS?
mental_floss
BIG QUESTIONS
WHAT'S INSIDE A BLACK HOLE?
WHEN YOU LOSE WEIGHT, WHERE DOES THE FAT GO?
DO I REALLY HAVE TO WASH MY JEANS?
WHAT IS DÉJÀ VU?
WHO WAS THE GENIUS WHO INVENTED INSTANT RAMEN?
MAKE YOU RICH

Thank you for the amazing piece about Madeleine L'Engle. You made her bio new, even to me!

@charlottejv (L'ENGLE'S GRANDDAUGHTER!)

My roommate is on vacation and his latest issue just got delivered. I read pg. 1 and have never been more intrigued by a magazine.

@jsandys10

Picked up my first *mental_floss* and I am beyond obsessed. Nerding big time. Random facts, coming thru. #YASSS

@leeannevoc

After devouring our annual big questions issue, readers begged us to answer some more. Our staff writers took up the challenge.

WHY DO MY EYES TURN RED IN THE POOL?

Are you sure you want to know the answer? Because it's not pretty. Chlorine isn't the culprit. It's all the nasty stuff—urine, feces, sweat, dirt—mixed *with* the chlorine. When somone pees in the pool, for instance, the nitrogen in the urine combines with chlorine to form a chemical irritant called chloramine. That's what makes your eyes turn red. **—Shaunacy Ferro**

WHEN DID PINK BECOME A "GIRL COLOR?"

It wasn't always this way! In 1918, an article from a trade publication called *Earnshaw's Infants' Department* declared that "Pink is for the boys, and blue for the girls." The writers used the same gendered logic people use today, calling pink "strong" and blue "delicate" and "dainty." For some reason, people's minds began to change around the end of WWII, and by the 1980s the line was firmly drawn. **—Stacy Conradt**

QUEEN ELIZABETH II CELEBRATED HER BIRTHDAY THIS YEAR ON APRIL 21 *AND* JUNE 13. WHAT GIVES?

Like many monarchs before her, Queen Elizabeth II has two birthdays—the anniversary of the day she was born, and a day in June labeled her "official" birthday. The tradition dates back to George II. **—Hannah Keyser**

MENTAL FLAWS

In "17 Essential Reads" [July/August 2005] we said the "sci-fi wobbly noise" in the Beach Boys' "Good Vibrations" was a theremin. Not exactly. It's a tannerin. The instruments sound alike, but the tannerin resembles a tiny keyboard and is played via a sliding knob. Also, in "Coffee or a Nap?" [September 2015], we said 200mg of coffee lasts for about six hours. We meant to say 200mg of *caffeine*. Apparently, we needed more java. And in the July/August 2015 issue we failed to credit Sheila McClear with writing "The Bittersweet History of Candy Land" and "How to Gorge Without the Guilt." Sorry, Sheila!

SHARE A PICTURE OF YOURSELF WITH AN ISSUE OF *MENTAL_FLOSS* AND #IHEARTMFMAG AND YOU COULD SEE YOURSELF HERE!

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- When Cats Delivered Mail in Belgium
- How to Appreciate Batman Comics Like an Expert

- 12 Haunted Tours Worth Traveling For
- Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Albert Einstein
- 11 Things You Might Not Know About Cheese

- Beatrix Potter, Mushroom Expert

What Exactly Is American Cheese?

Not cheese, for one. For the full answer, go to ***mentalfloss.com/cheeseimposter***

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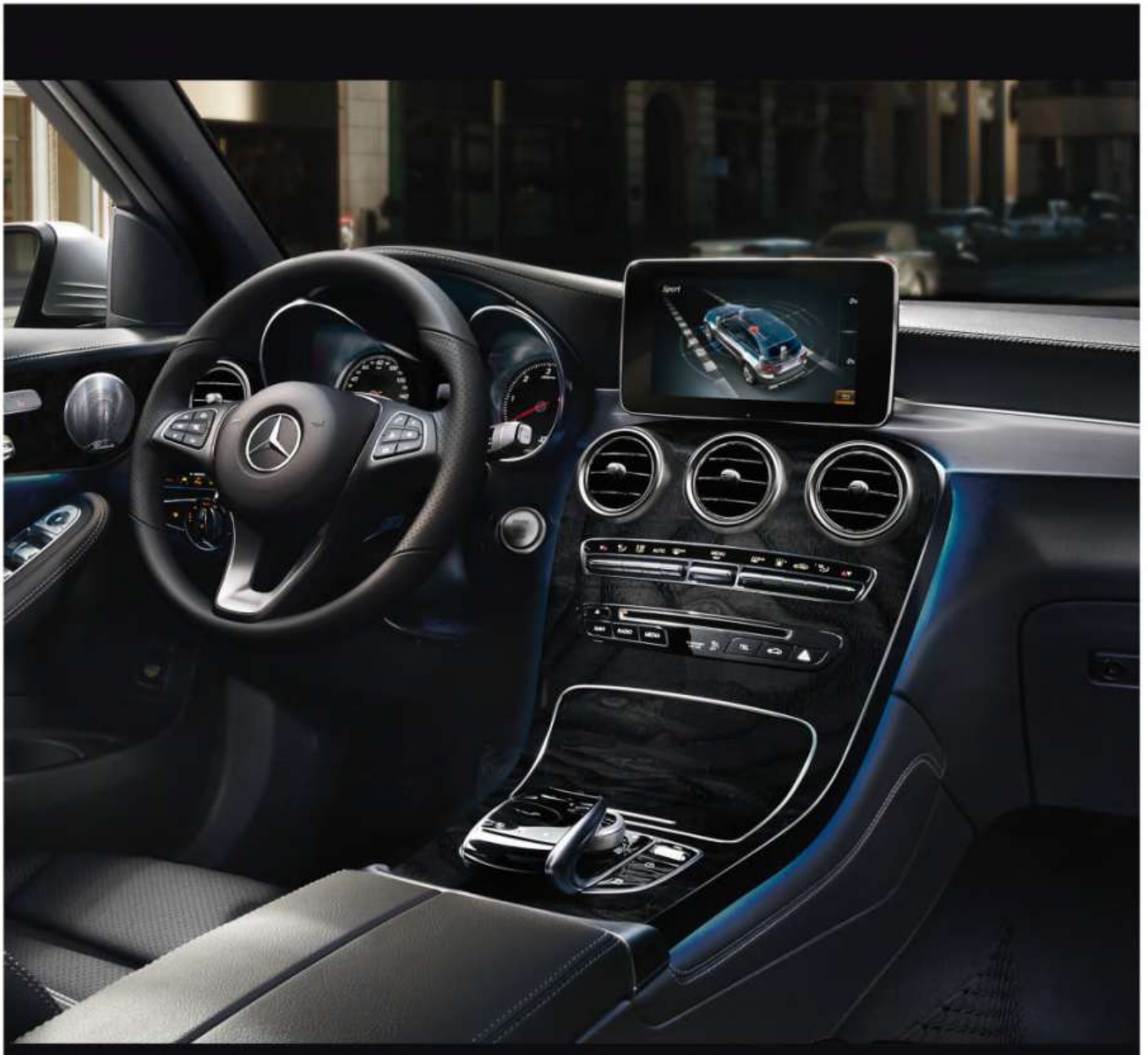

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Food for Thought

MY ADVENTURES IN MAGAZINE-MAKING started early. My very first was "published" in the mid-1980s; it was a library-photocopied and hand-stapled homage to food I called *Eater's Digest*. Even then, at 8 years old, I considered food among the most salient subjects of our time. I also, clearly, couldn't resist the allure of a good pun.

Eater's Digest mostly catalogued my favorite recipes, which more or less amounted to the ones I'd borrowed from my mom's cookbook collection and reinterpreted with creative flourishes. At some point, I'd learned that recipes—unlike, say, poems or songs—weren't subject to copyright. So you could take an existing one, make some tweaks to it, write it down, and it was fair to call it your own. Most of my innovations were things like cutting the carrots into Pac-Man shapes while making vegetable soup. The idea that food was the perfect format for wild experimentation of all kinds was no doubt a huge part of its charm.

I'm not alone in this: Humans, perhaps more than any other species, love to play with their food. This month, we're excited to present our second annual Platypus Awards to nine revolutionaries who are doing just that. (It all begins on page 35.)

But these tinkerers aren't just fooling around for fun—they're making potentially world-changing contributions to the environment, social justice, sustainable business, and public health. In collecting their stories, I couldn't get over how incredible it is that what's right under our noses (and in our mouths) will be the stuff that shapes our future.

As usual, this issue has plenty for everyone, especially if you happen to be a fan of Batman (page 27), processed meats (page 52), Mr. McFeely (page 17), the humble bandana (page 22), haunted houses (page 32), the Muppets (page 61), or sea cucumbers (page 66). Of course, our hope is that you might discover a taste for something new in these pages. If that's the case, let us know.

jessanne

@jessanne

ALAMY

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NICK GREENE's story "How the Sausage is (Literally) Made" (page 52) took the Brooklynite to a factory in Philadelphia, where he marveled at pork being transferred into industrial-grade tumblers for marinating. "These rugby ball–sized hunks of meat were sucked up a giant straw, disappearing with a *thwump*," says Greene, who has written for *Vice* and *The Village Voice*. He vows to use his new favorite term, *sausage matrix,* "at least once a day."

While profiling some of our innovators in taste ("The 2015 Platypus Awards," page 35), **MAGGIE KOERTH-BAKER** was especially inspired by anthropologist Carla Martin, who's striving to improve conditions for cacao farmers. "I'm paying more attention to how people get paid for growing the food I eat," says the Minneapolis writer, whose work has also appeared in *The New York Times*. "I want to do a better job of supporting farmers around the world."

"Sausages have been through such a big process," says U.K. illustrator **ANDY SMITH,** who depicted our behind-the-scenes look at the spiced links' journey from factory to plate (page 52). "But unlike other meat, they look very tidy. They are the candy bars of the meat world!" Smith's clients have included Nike, Sony, and McDonald's.

This month, New Yorker **CAMILLE DODERO** chronicled—and became obsessed with—producer Michael Uslan's decades-long quest to make a Batman movie ("The Boy Who Saved Batman," page 27). "I started having recurring dreams about Batman," says Dodero, a senior editor at *Billboard*. "Now I'm reminding myself daily to chase after the things I want, no matter how absurd or far-fetched they seem."

COURTESY GREENE, KOERTH-BAKER, SMITH, DODERO

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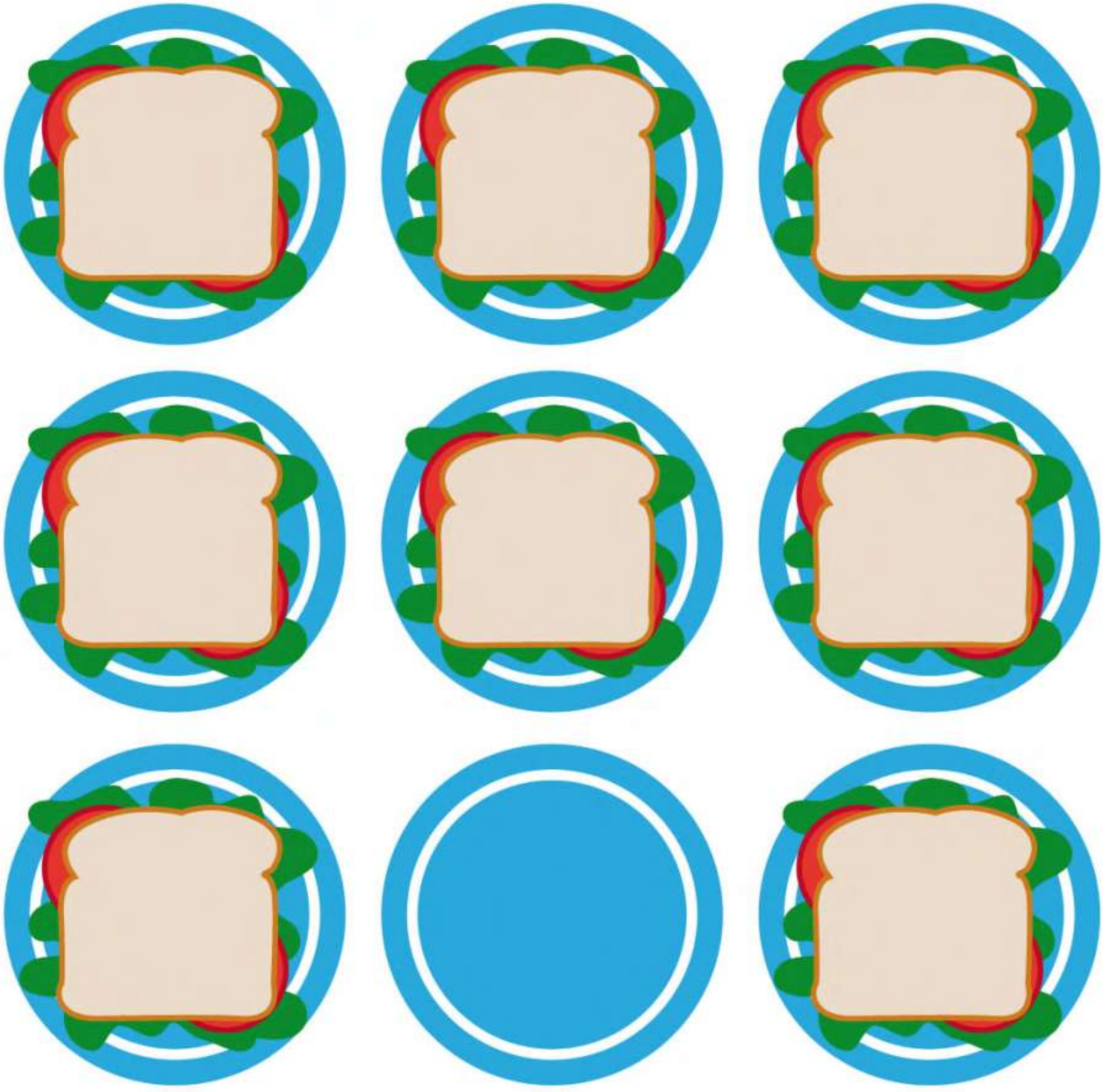
1 IN 9 AROUND THE WORLD GO HUNGRY.



THAT'S ONE TOO MANY.

Finding solutions to hunger means supporting local vocational programs, volunteering at local food banks and putting the right agricultural resources in the hands of developing communities.

Be a part of the solution. Sign up for We Scare Hunger or donate today at WE.ORG.

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A CHEAPSKATE'S GUIDE TO MAILING GEMS ›
THE WHITE HOUSE'S HEAD HANDWRITERS ›
WHY YOUR DOG HATES THE POSTMAN ›

POSTCARDS FROM THE EDGE

5 mail stations at the fringes of the world

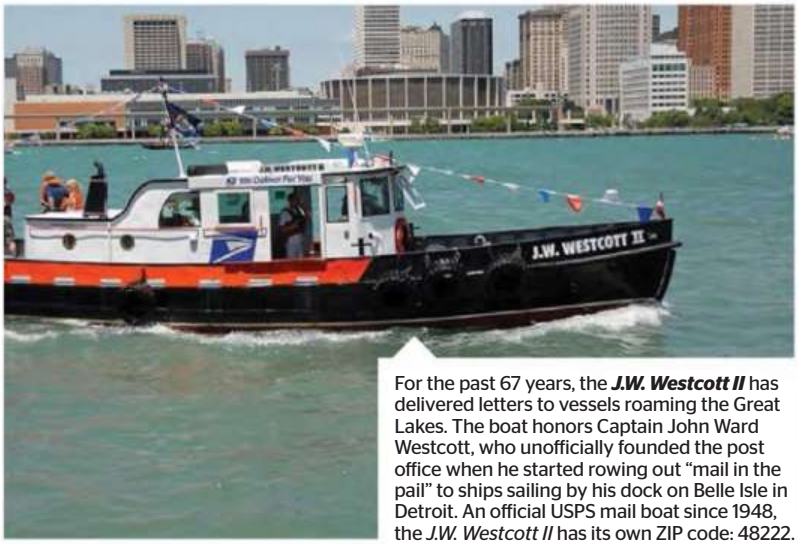
Post Office Bay in the Galapagos Islands relies on the goodwill of visitors to get its mail delivered. That's because the post office is just a barrel filled with letters. Tourists are encouraged to plumb the drum for envelopes, find addresses that are relatively close to their homes, and take them back for delivery. The tradition dates back to the 1700s, when British whalers devised the method as an optimistic—if slightly tortuous—scheme for communicating with loved ones in the U.K.

SEE THE OTHERS

THIS PAGE: ALAMY; NEXT SPREAD: PHOTOGRAPHY BY CONNIE ZHOU/OTTO (SUBTROPOLIS). ALAMY (PALACIO DE CORREOS DE MEXICO, PORT LOCKROY)

5 MAIL STATIONS AT THE FRINGES OF THE WORLD

The USPS's **Stamp Fulfillment Center** is in Kansas City, Missouri, 150 feet underground and inside a limestone cave called SubTropolis, the "world's largest underground business complex." The center stores between 400 and 600 million stamps for distribution. The cave's consistent temperatures and low humidity keep them in mint condition.



For the past 67 years, the ***J.W. Westcott II*** has delivered letters to vessels roaming the Great Lakes. The boat honors Captain John Ward Westcott, who unofficially founded the post office when he started rowing out "mail in the pail" to ships sailing by his dock on Belle Isle in Detroit. An official USPS mail boat since 1948, the *J.W. Westcott II* has its own ZIP code: 48222.

→ **THE BOTTOM LINE:** IF "SNAIL MAIL" WERE A REAL THING, IT WOULD TAKE YOUR RUN-OF-THE-MILL GARDEN SNAIL

Port Lockroy on Goudier Island, Antarctica, is home to the world's most remote post office. There's no heat or running water, no Wi-Fi or cell signal, and no main power supply—and the average temperature hovers near the freezing point. The area, however, is visited by 18,000 tourists a year, who have a lot to write home about.

For five months a year, the post office and museum at Port Lockroy is run by three to four employees with some very special qualifications. Just check out this reprint of a recent job posting from the Antarctic Heritage Trust's website.

HELP WANTED!

COORDINATION: Can you carry a big heavy box over slippery rocks and slushy snow whilst dodging penguins?

POSITIVE: Can you enthuse to visitors when it is -5°C and blowing a blizzard as well as cook supper cheerfully after a long cold day and very little sleep?

PERSONABLE: Can you live and work with just three others for five months and be friendly and cooperative throughout?

HAPPY: Happy to be confined to a small island with no prospect of climbing the surrounding peaks?

ADAPTABILITY TO DIFFERENT SITUATIONS: Are you happy not to shower for up to a month, live in close proximity to three people and 2,000 smelly penguins for five months?

ILLUSTRATION BY BROWNFOX4 (CC BY-SA 3.0)

Palacio de Correos de Mexico means "Postal Palace of Mexico City." Trust us, nothing is lost in translation. Mexico City's Palacio is a veritable mail mecca, capable of processing more than 100 million letters a year and featuring an eclectic design that mixes Rococo, English Gothic, Art Deco, Neoclassical, and Venetian Gothic Revival architecture.

AT LEAST 9.3 YEARS (WITH NO PIT STOPS) TO DELIVER A PACKAGE 2,445 MILES FROM NEW YORK CITY TO LOS ANGELES.

The Most Explosive Mail Ever Sent

The brief and glorious period when delivering postcards turned into rocket science

ON JUNE 8, 1959, a large Regulus I nuclear missile pointed straight at America's shoreline. The missile was perched on a submarine lurking about 100 miles off the Florida coast. Just before noon, it blasted into the clouds, traveling more than 100 miles in just 22 minutes, and landed squarely on its target, the Naval Auxiliary Air Station in Jacksonville, Florida—successfully delivering 3,000 pieces of mail.

For as long as people have been sealing envelopes, they've been finding ways to get messages to their destination faster. During the late 1800s, mail balloons and gliders competed with carrier pigeons for airspace. When airplanes swooped in, people were still unsatisfied with the wait. By the 1930s, inventors were toying with something even faster: rockets.

The idea wasn't new. Scientists had been mulling "mortar mail" since 1810, with mixed results. In the 19th century, people on the island of Tonga used military rockets to blast mail over the reefs to Samoa. (Most crashed into the sea.) After World War I, German and Austrian scientists resurrected the idea. In 1931, an amateur rocketeer named Friedrich Schmiedl successfully launched 102 letters across a mountain in the Alps. Shortly after, businessman Gerhard Zucker pitched the idea to the U.K. government. He exhibited the technology by stuffing more than 1,200 envelopes into two rockets and firing them over some Scottish isles. They exploded.

The United States didn't take rocket mail seriously until the Cold War. By then, the volume of mail had spiked more than 30 percent and Arthur Summerfield, the postmaster general, was desperate to deal with the glut. So in 1959, officials hosted an experiment: They transformed the *USS Barbero*, a nuclear sub, into a floating post office. They removed the nuclear warhead on a Regulus I cruise missile, replaced it with two postal mail containers, and blasted it to Florida. It stuck a perfect landing.

Summerfield joyfully declared, "Before man reaches the moon, mail will be delivered within hours from New York to California, to Britain, to India, or Australia by guided missiles. We stand on the threshold of rocket mail." He neglected the fact that postal workers needed time to sort and route the mail. Plus, it was the 1950s. Americans weren't super excited to see rockets zooming over their backyards. The government eventually got the memo. –LUCAS REILLY

ILLUSTRATION BY RYAN INZANA

→ **THE BOTTOM LINE:** IN 2001, BRAZIL INTRODUCED A COFFEE-SCENTED STAMP. NOT TO BE OUTDONE, CHINA RELEASED STAMPS

EXCLUSIVE!

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE POST OFFICE'S MOTTO

Despite what you may have heard, the U.S. Postal Service doesn't have an official motto. The famous creed "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds" is not official. It doesn't even have anything to do with American postal workers! The ancient Greek historian Herodotus spun a similar phrase about 2,500 years ago during the Greco-Persian Wars. (He held the Persian mounted postal couriers in high esteem.) The slogan became tangled with the USPS in 1912, when New York City's Pennsylvania Terminal post office was built; a paraphrase of Herodotus's saying is engraved on the building's facade. Goes to show that some myths really are set in stone.

—JULIE WINTERBOTTOM

5 Things People Actually Put in the Mail

How to take advantage of the best bargain in the world: the USPS

1. A BANK
W.H. Coltharp was in charge of building the Bank of Vernal, Utah, and wanted the edifice to be made of bricks from Salt Lake City. But it was 1916. Bricks were usually shipped via commercial freight wagon, and that was expensive. So Coltharp found a way to cut costs: ship bricks one by one. He ordered 15,000 bricks, individually wrapped, and had them shipped by parcel post. The shrewd scheme cost the post office a fortune.

2. LIVE CATS
In 1897, New York City installed a 27-mile system of pneumatic tubes, connecting 23 post offices. It shot mail at 35 miles per hour, blasting anything that could fit in a shipping canister. Like cats. Eyewitnesses reported one cat, once extracted, appeared shaken but unharmed. It wasn't the last time a cat took a ride on the tube: The system was later used to transport a sick kitty to the vet. No word if it took Dramamine before embarking.

3. THE HOPE DIAMOND
The Hope Diamond is worth more than $250 million. You'd think anybody planning to move it would bring an armed guard of Chuck Norris clones. But when jeweler Harry Winston donated the gem to the Smithsonian in 1958, he simply sent it in the post. "It's the safest way to mail gems," he said. "I've sent gems all over the world that way." Shipping the stone cost him only $2.44! (He paid extra to insure it.)

4. POTATOES
So long as an item is self-contained and reasonably sturdy, the USPS will ship anything package-free. Just slap on some stamps and write an address on a potato, for example, and your spud is ready to go. This goes for other edibles too, like coconuts and limes. If you're too lazy (or embarrassed) to send a potato, the company Mail a Spud will do it for you. Whether the recipient will be flattered by your well-traveled tater is another story.

5. HOUSES
For more than three decades, you could buy homes in the Sears, Roebuck and Co. catalog—and most pieces were delivered to your doorstep (if you had one). From 1908 to 1940, the Modern Homes catalog sold about 75,000 houses, with prices ranging from $360 to $2,890. The precut fitted timber claimed to require just one carpenter. Along with a home, the kit came with two trees to plant in your new front yard.

SMITHSONIAN (DIAMOND)

Lunsford Richardson, a 19th-century pharmacist and creator of Vicks VapoRub, is also credited with inventing junk mail.

THAT SMELLED LIKE SWEET AND SOUR PORK, WHILE BELGIUM PUT OUT STAMPS THAT SMELLED AND TASTED LIKE CHOCOLATE.

How to Ship a Panda

Whether it's delivering polar bears to zoos or prize horses to the World Equestrian Games, FedEx rules the animal-shipping kingdom. **David Lange,** director of charter operations, reveals how they do it.

BY **JESS HULLINGER**

Since 2000, FedEx has shipped 12 pandas to zoos. How much did it cost?
It varies. We sell the entire airplane. Whether you want to move one ton or 80 pounds, you buy the entire airplane. Shipping an animal is different from shipping a box. Trying to translate a cost per pound for an endangered species, it's hard to make a comparison.

What kinds of supplies do the pandas need?
We usually carry a breeding pair, so two enclosures with bamboo, water, apples—a couple thousand pounds of supplies. When we're carrying horses we bring water and hay. One time, we carried 10 or 15 tons of tack and hay and feed.

You ship hundreds of horses every year. What kind of plans have to be made before a flight?
When you're moving 45 horses on a flight with 25 grooms, it takes special handling. There are the enclosures, the supplies, the food and water. Attendants and vets must be on the flight. Background checks and visas and passports. There are customs and immigration requirements for not only the grooms and vets, but also the animals.

The animals need passports?
Absolutely. When moving horses—some of these horses are worth millions of dollars—they go in and out without having to pay duties and taxes. There's a lot of paperwork, blood testing, certification, and quarantine at the destination.

How do you keep them comfortable?
Temperature control. When you're moving a lot of horses, that generates humidity. We often fly in the middle of the night, when it's cooler. With an aquarium, you've got an animal in water, so we have to consider takeoff and landing profiles. We can't take off too quickly.

Who cleans up after the animals?
Professional cleaners take care of that. You'd be surprised the rules different countries have. I've seen some amazing stuff. The amount of disinfectant ... we flew our horse charter into Shanghai last year. They sprayed down the entire airplane, the crew steps, everything. That's part of the quarantine.

Are some animals too large?
Sometimes we can't help the customer because the animal won't fit. But when we've committed to carry, we'll find the right-sized aircraft. If we were just moving a whale or two, an Airbus might suffice. Moving 50 or 60 horses with 20 grooms and attendants, we'll need a bigger airplane.

Any escape stories?
No. I can safely say we've never had any escapees.

CORBIS (PANDA). ALAMY (BOX). ISTOCK (CONFETTI)

→ **THE BOTTOM LINE:** DURING WORLD WAR II, THE USPS REDUCED SOLDIERS' LETTERS INTO MICROFILM TO AVOID FILLING

BACK OF THE ENVELOPE

3 things that big breakthroughs were recorded on

ITEM	ENVELOPES	TOILET PAPER	NAPKINS
USUALLY USED FOR	Mailing love letters, taste-testing glue	General hygiene, Halloween pranks	Preventing ketchup stains, prenups
CLAIM TO FAME	Helped invent lasers	Aided in pop hits	Shark Week
THE PROOF	Physicist Charles Townes was studying beams of energy when an idea struck him during a morning walk. He pulled an envelope from his jacket and scribbled the math that would spawn a billion-dollar industry.	Richard Berry wrote the lyrics for "Louie Louie" on toilet paper. Which is funny; when the Kingsmen recorded their garbled cover of the song, the FBI launched a 119-page investigation to see if the lyrics were dirty.	Discovery Channel's beloved institution began on a bar napkin. Executives were enjoying a drink, and someone was apparently inebriated enough to float the idea of a week about sharks. Luckily, somebody had a pen.

Voice actor Elwood Edwards recorded the AOL "You've Got Mail!" sound on a cassette tape in his living room.

Pop Culture's Postal Service All-Stars

They might not have delivered real mail, but they really matter to us.

BY **EMMA ADLER**

MR. MCFEELY
Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood
Named after Fred Rogers's grandfather (Fred Brooks McFeely), the legendary postman was involved from the first to the last episode (383 appearances, total), with a catchphrase epitomizing an ideal all postal workers can appreciate: "Speedy delivery!"

KARL MALONE
Utah Jazz
Two-time NBA MVP Malone earned his nickname, "The Mailman," for consistently delivering on the court. The power forward still holds the record for most starts in the NBA (1,471), helped bring home two Olympic gold medals, and scored the second-most points in NBA history.

MR. ZIP
USPS
Mr. ZIP was introduced in 1963 to help raise awareness when the USPS adopted ZIP codes, but he also gigged as the postal service's bearer of bad news, showing up on promotional material about increased postage rates. But who could shoot a messenger with a smile like that?

REBA THE MAIL LADY
Pee-wee's Playhouse
Delivering the mail to Pee-wee's Playhouse could not have been easy. Talking chairs. A disembodied genie's head. Secret words. But Reba, played by S. Epatha Merkerson—who would go on to win Emmys, Golden Globes, and SAG awards—was up to the task. A saint, really.

CLIFF CLAVIN
Cheers
Actor John Ratzenberger received angry letters from real postmen, because he wore his mail keys to the bar (a cardinal USPS sin). But Cliff was the bad boy of postal carriers, a one-man cliché-defying machine. Then again, the character was originally supposed to be a security guard.

PAPERBOY
Paperboy
The titular character of Atari's classic 1984 arcade game had to dodge tornadoes, break dancers, bees, supersized cats, storm drains, and the Grim Reaper. And for what? Kid didn't even get a government pension. He may not technically be a postal worker, but he's still one of the greats.

PRECIOUS CARGO SPACE WITH BAGS OF PAPER LETTERS. A SACK OF "V-MAIL" WAS THE EQUIVALENT OF 37 SACKS OF REGULAR MAIL.

CORBIS (MALONE). ALAMY (MR. MCFEELY, CLIFF CLAVIN)

A Time-Traveler's Guide to Mailing a Letter

Prepare yourself: The post office used to work a little differently.

BY **BESS LOVEJOY**

GRAND CANYON, 1975 TO PRESENT
Supai is the only town in the Grand Canyon—it's part of the Havasupai Indian reservation—and mules deliver its mail, carrying about 130 pounds of supplies per trip down an eight-mile trail into the 3,000-foot-deep Havasu Canyon.

ALASKA, 1899
Santa isn't the only one who has used a reindeer delivery service. In the 1800s, the U.S. Postal Service employed the animals to deliver mail on snowy routes in Alaska. The deer worked better than dogs—they pulled the mail (piled on sleds) faster, and postal workers didn't need to lug any special food. The reindeer just grazed on lichen along the way.

BABYLON, 1700 BCE
Don't be surprised if your mail is coated in fur or feathers. The first envelopes protected documents from the elements and prying eyes. Babylonians wrapped messages in a thin sheet of clay, crimped the edges, and baked it like a pie. Other early envelopes were made of animal skin.

HAWAIIAN LEPER COLONIES, 1880
Don't turn your letters away just because they stink. During plagues, people doused mail from infected regions in boiling vinegar. For lepers in the Molokai colony in Hawaii, only double disinfection would do—mail was treated with sulfur dioxide at the colony and fumigated with formaldehyde after arriving in Honolulu.

MONGOL EMPIRE, 1210
Airmail has changed a little over the years. Genghis Khan relied on carrier pigeons to relay messages of his victories back home in Mongolia, creating a string of messenger posts that stretched across much of Asia and Eastern Europe. Of course, it didn't stop with Khan—in the 19th century, Reuters news agency also flew stock prices between Aachen and Brussels.

BRITAIN, 18TH CENTURY
Pack plenty of farthings. Before stamps appeared in the 1840s, recipients paid to get their letters. To save money, some developed secret codes in the addresses so receivers could get messages just by glancing at the envelope. After reading it, they'd simply refuse to accept the letter. Since newspapers traveled for free, people also used them to communicate, underlining words, writing in invisible ink made of milk, or pasting notes over articles.

UNITED STATES, 1775
Being elected has its perks. Introduced in 17th-century Great Britain, "franking privileges" allowed government officials to send mail for free just by writing their names on the envelopes. (And it wasn't just mail—cows, maids, and even feather beds could be "franked.") The United States instituted the same privilege, but preprinted envelopes didn't exist, so the process was exhausting—some early members of Congress spent three hours a day signing their names on envelopes (some even hired ghostwriters). Punster Benjamin Franklin signed his name "B. Free Franklin."

ILLUSTRATION BY JESSE HARP

→ **THE BOTTOM LINE:** THE BRITISH BUY MORE GREETING CARDS PER CAPITA THAN ANY OTHER NATION: 31 PER PERSON. WOMEN

SECRETS OF THE WHITE HOUSE Calligraphers

In 2013, pundits criticized the Obama administration for spending nearly $280,000 a year on three White House calligraphers. Here's what you need to know about every art major's dream job.

They're a White House staple. Calligraphers have worked at the White House since John Adams started sending guests fancy dinner invites back in 1801.

They design everything! Proclamations, citations, military commissions, special announcements, menus, place cards, invitations, official greetings, and even signs for the White House vegetable garden. One day, a calligrapher might inscribe the name of the Presidential Medal of Freedom winner. The next, they might pen a menu for a visiting monarch.

Like other experienced civil employees, they get paid handsomely. The chief calligrapher makes $98,669. Considering that nearly every head of state in the world handles their artwork, we think it's worth it.

Hand cramps can't stop them. During Clinton's tenure, the White House hosted more than 100,000 official guests. On a typical day, calligraphers may make hundreds of place cards just for meals.

November is the toughest month. That's because the White House is prepping for an onslaught of holiday receptions. In 2013, calligraphers hand-addressed 10,000 envelopes for the season.

They prepare for emergencies. In case special guests appear for State dinners or official events unannounced, the administration keeps a calligrapher waiting in the wings. (You never know when you might need an emergency place card.)

The team does about 40 percent of its work by hand. The rest is done on the computer when tight deadlines demand it.

They stash an arsenal. Calligrapher Rick Muffler's toolbox contained 28 pen holders, eight brushes, a bunch of nibs, and one hair dryer, which he used to make the ink dry faster.

Which even includes a copier. It'd be impractical not to use one. After a calligrapher designs an invitation, for example, the design is sent to an engraver, who copies it. The copies return to the calligrapher, who grabs a pen and personalizes the invitation with the guest's name, matching the original hand style.

The scripts are called "hands," not fonts. Which, considering calligraphers are using their hands, makes sense.

JESS MATHEWS (CALLIGRAPHERS); ALAMY (DOG)

SCIENCE SAYS

Why Your Dog Hates Postal Workers

IT MIGHT SEEM LIKE a TV trope, but there's actual science at play here. It works like this: The sight of a uniformed stranger carrying a big, goofy bag drives Fido to get excited and bark. When the letter carrier leaves to visit the next mailbox on his or her appointed rounds, the dog mistakenly believes yelping drove them away. So the next day, it barks again. And it works again! And again. It's a case of operant conditioning: The dog acts that way because the behavior is reinforced and rewarded—the postal service is unintentionally training your dog to go bonkers. And it's a huge issue. Aggressive dogs are such a constant (and costly) problem that the USPS recommends all postal workers carry a full can of dog pepper spray, which stains the "dog menace" yellow so it can be identified. To alert mail carriers of toothy pooches along a route, the agency issues bright orange "Dog Warning Cards," which reveal the dog's address, breed, and name. But even that's not enough. The USPS still releases a yearly dog attack report, which recently revealed that hounds took a bite out of 5,767 postal workers last year. That's nearly 16 attacks a day. With that in mind, maybe you should throw your mail carrier a bone.

The @ symbol goes by many names: monkey tail *(Dutch),* Elephant's trunk *(Sweden), and* rolled pickled herring *(Czech).*

PURCHASE 85 PERCENT OF THEM. → WALT DISNEY, CHARLES MINGUS, AND KNUTE ROCKNE WERE ALL ONCE POSTAL WORKERS.

Visit wassaicproject.org for more information!

FALL EVENTS AT THE WASSAIC PROJECT

SEPTEMBER 20
2015 EXHIBITION CLOSING DAY

LAST SATURDAYS
SEPTEMBER 26
MUSIC UNDER THE STARS CONCERT

OCTOBER 31
THE HAUNTED MILL

THE WASSAIC PROJECT

Maxon Mills,
37 Furnace Bank Road
Wassaic, NY

MASTER YOUR MEMORY ›
WHERE DOES PAISLEY COME FROM? ›
OUR ESSENTIAL DIM SUM PRIMER ›

CHECKS, PLEASE

Why are dumplings best served on weekend mornings? How does something stay in fashion for two centuries? And what's the secret to remembering the things you can't remember? Find the answers to these burning questions, and more, in our guide to the Flossier things in life.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LIZ BARCLAY

BRAINTRAINER

Mind Your Memory

Thanks to technology, we rely less on our memories than we probably ever have. Don't want to give in? Try these three things daily to sharpen your recall. No practice needed.

1 **Jones for java.** At a 2015 conference on Alzheimer's research, scientists presented a study on the impact of alcohol and caffeine on cognitive function in older adults that showed no long-term differences in memory in those who drank alcohol. Even more surprisingly, there was a correlation between moderate caffeine consumption (two to five cups a day) and increased[1] memory abilities in healthy older adults. Irish coffees, all around!

2 **Stop watching TV.** At that same conference, another memory study was presented—featuring subjects studied over a remarkable 25 years—that confirmed what you might already suspect: TV is eating at your brain. Adults who spent more time watching television than their less-Netflix-addicted counterparts were 1.5 times more likely[2] to experience cognitive decline over their lifetimes. Is this season of *Survivor* really that great, anyway?

3 **Don't forget to sleep.** A newly published study asked people to remember fake words just before shut-eye, and then again after getting a solid night of slumber. The result? They nearly doubled[3] their "chances of remembering previously unrecalled material" after snoozing. In other words, while we knew rest was vital to accessing memory, there's now evidence that fuzzy memories get more vivid with a good night's sleep. **—FOSTER KAMER**

[1] "Moderate Caffeine Consumption Is Associated with Better Memory Scores ..." Alzheimer's Association International Conference 2015, Chute, M.P.
[2] "Early Adult Patterns of Physical Activity and Television Watching ..." Alzheimer's Association International Conference 2015, Hoang, T.D. and Yaffe, K.
[3] "Sleep Not Just Protects Memories Against Forgetting ..." *Cortex*, July 2015, Dumay, N.

The iconic paisley pattern has Persian origins, representing a spray of flowers or a bent cedar tree. It was imported to Europe via the Dutch East India company; its name comes from the Scottish town of Paisley, where a lot of paisley fabric was produced.

THE LITTLE THINGS

The Paisley Bandana

FOR CENTURIES, THIS PATTERNED COTTON CLOTH HAS PERSISTED AS A PERFECT SPECIMEN OF FORM AND FUNCTION.

BY **KYLE CHAYKA**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **LIZ BARCLAY**

THE WORD *BANDANA* HAS ORIGINS IN THE SANSKRIT *BADHNĀTI*, THE VERB "TO TIE," REFERRING TO A TECHNIQUE OF TIE-DYING CLOTH. BY THE 18TH CENTURY, THE WORD EVOLVED INTO THE ANGLICIZED "BANDANNOES," WHICH REFERRED TO COTTON HANDKERCHIEFS.

Called Turkey red, the bandana's signature color was the result of a laborious method of fast-dyeing cotton textiles. The process varied, but manufacturers usually bathed the cotton in fish oil, sheep's dung, madder root, and "intestinal liquor."

The dots in the bandana's paisley patterns were originally made by a process of bleaching that uses chlorine forced through perforated lead plates.

▼ 90 percent of Turkey red fabric was exported to British colonies including India, Hong Kong, and the Americas. The light cotton was popular in tropical areas.

▼ Martha Washington popularized the bandana in the United States by having an image of her husband printed on some (in spite of a British ban on textile printing that was in effect at the time).

GET IT!

Starting at $2.99, onlybandanas.com

▼ After Martha, bandanas became a marketing strategy, a pre-Facebook "Like" button. Custom prints were made for political candidates hoping to adopt some of Washington's charisma.

▼ The bandana became a functional accessory for cowboys and other blue-collar workers who used them to protect their noses and mouths from dust. Rosie the Riveter wore one in her hair in the famous 1943 WWII poster.

▼ Bandanas have long been a subcultural symbol. Miners in the 1930s united with neck-tied red bandanas, helping spread the term "rednecks." In the 1970s, gay groups used colored handkerchiefs to communicate sexual preferences. Urban gangs still use bandanas to identify each other today.

▼ In 1986, a classic red, black, and white paisley bandana entered the collection of the Cooper Hewitt museum.

TRY THIS!

DIM SUM

BETTER KNOW THE DELICIOUS STEAMED AND FRIED DELICACIES OF THIS AGE-OLD TRADITION.

BY **FOSTER KAMER**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **LIZ BARCLAY**

Dim sum, the Cantonese-Chinese twist on tapas, is unique among cuisines. Often served out of rolling carts, these delicate dishes emerged from a rich, centuries-old history, and today feature food as delicious as it is beautiful, and as beautiful as it is varied. There are thousands of permutations of dim sum—typically, they're steamed, fried, and baked goods, recipes that have been mastered over generations.

It's also finicky. If you're not an early riser on weekend mornings, when it's most commonly served, you might miss the good stuff. Why weekend mornings? Part of it is just logistics, as the detailed construction of the items disrupts kitchen flow, taking more time and painstaking attention than your typical wok-tossed Chinese meal. But mostly?

"Tradition, man," says Wilson Tang, the owner of Manhattan's critically acclaimed Chinatown eatery Nom Wah Tea Parlor. However, when he took over Nom Wah from his uncle in 2011—becoming only the third owner since it opened in 1920—he planned a big change: He'd serve the cuisine at all hours. Dim sum–craving New Yorkers have packed the place in droves ever since. Tang opened the first outpost of Nom Wah earlier this year, in Philadelphia. Clearly, a hankering for all-hours dim sum is spreading, and hopefully there's a spot for it arriving near you soon. Until then, keep setting the Sunday alarm clock.

HOW IT GOT HERE

Dim sum's origins date back hundreds of years to the Silk Road, when purveyors would set up roadside tea services for traveling merchants, with snacks. In modern times, tea serves as the traditionally social part of the meal, but also has a more pragmatic purpose: to cut through the grease and help digestion.

THE DUMPLING DIFFERENCE:

On any dim sum menu, you're bound to see all kinds of dumplings, with all kinds of stuffings, ranging from pork or chicken to shrimp and fish, or any number of land/sea/vegetable combinations. But there are a few key distinguishers: *Siu mai* (or "shumai") usually bear an "open face," or unsealed top. A wonton is typically sealed at the top with pleats, and is often served with broth (but you might see the term *wonton* used as a catchall). And *har gow* are typically sealed to the side, with a delicate, translucent wrapper.

WHAT IT MEANS

The literal translation of *dim sum* is "with a touch of heart." According to Tang, it alludes to the tender care with which everything is made. "Everything is hand-pleated—it takes decades of culinary experience," he says. But if you wanted to say you're eating dim sum in Cantonese, you'd say "yum cha," which means "drinking tea."

There is something

TERRIBLY WRONG

with the Home Security Industry

Hi. Maybe you've been broken into before, or maybe you haven't. But if you ever decide to protect your home against unfortunate events like that, you're in for a shock. We don't want to scare you off of protecting your home, because honestly, it's really important that you do it. But we feel responsible for sharing these facts with you: Most alarm companies take advantage of people who want to feel safe. They offer you a "free" outdated alarm, but then require you to sign a long-term contract full of nasty fine print. It's pretty sickening really...but this isn't going to be all bad news. There is a better way to protect your home—get a SimpliSafe home security system. Our founder, a Harvard engineer, studied the alarm industry and found all kinds of problems with it. He designed SimpliSafe to fix them, so you can be safe, without having to spend a fortune or sign any contracts. SimpliSafe is wireless, you can order it online, and it's easy to install yourself—anyone can do it. It fits any home, apartment, or business. And it's more affordable, more reliable, and stronger than just about anything else out there.

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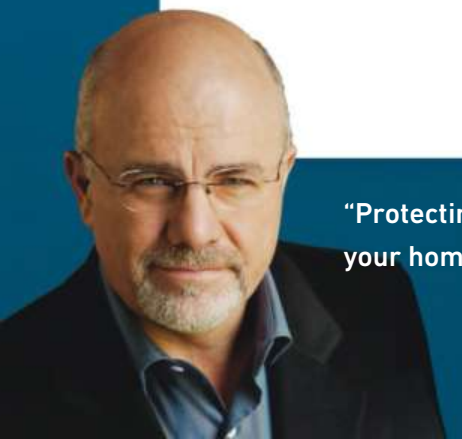

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—**Dave Ramsey,** personal finance expert & New York Times Bestselling author of the "The Total Money Makeover"

ALAMY

101 MASTERPIECES #49 ***BATMAN***

The Boy Who Saved Batman

A 14-YEAR-OLD COMIC BOOK FAN FROM NEW JERSEY, AND THE DREAM HE WOULDN'T LET DIE

BY CAMILLE DODERO

MICHAEL USLAN LIVED AND BREATHED comic books. When he was a teenager, his collection was so vast, it consumed his parents' New Jersey garage. In seventh grade, he co-founded a comic book club that coordinated a field trip to DC Comics' Manhattan headquarters. He even completed a script for a daily comic strip about the Cricket, a superhero he invented, and submitted drafts to newspapers. An employee at *The Sacramento Union* was so impressed, he suggested they collaborate—until he realized the author was in junior high.

No superhero fascinated Uslan like Batman. Unlike Superman, Batman didn't have special powers. His strength came from his will, training, and armored flying suit. Batman was human and damaged—as a child, he'd watched a stranger murder his parents and swore to avenge their deaths. That origin story deeply affected

Uslan, who couldn't consider a world in which his mom and dad didn't exist.

So it was with great excitement that he tuned in to the ABC premiere of *Batman* on January 12, 1966. Watching it, Uslan's heart sank. Portrayed by Adam West, TV's Batman was stilted, overly earnest, and almost buffoonish. Paired with his guileless sidekick, Robin, he wore tights and spoke in corny adages ("Crime never pays!") while imparting good-citizen lessons about proper grammar and paying taxes. Even the bad guys were ham-handed jokes, nothing like the terrifying, unhinged criminal overlords of the comic. The fight scenes? Slapstick routines replete with full-screen flashes of onomatopoeic gibberish ("POW! CRASH! BOFF!").

"Society was laughing at Batman—and that just killed me," Uslan said in the 2013 documentary *Legends of the Knight*. To him, Batman was an orphan whose vigilantism was a civic and emotional reconciliation, not a campy pop-art punch line. There and then, teenage Uslan made his own Bruce Wayne–like vow: "I would restore Batman to his true and rightful identity as the Dark Knight, a creature of the night stalking criminals from the shadows … a master detective who survived and thrived more by his wits than by his fists."

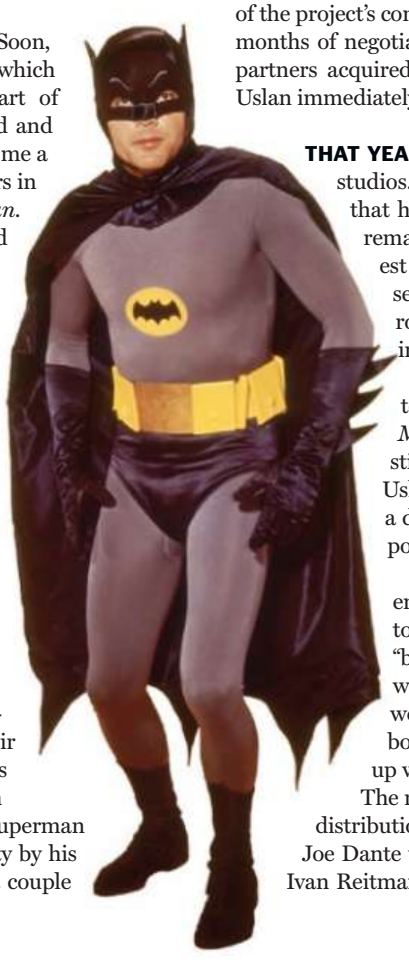
He would do this by making his own Batman movie.

BORN IN JERSEY CITY, New Jersey, to a mason contractor father and a bookkeeper mother, Uslan learned to read by thumbing through his older brother's comics. At 5, his brother brought him to a candy shop and let him pick two comics, one of which was *Detective Comics* #236, a 1956 title featuring Batman and Robin battling mobsters in a purple armored Bat-Tank.

Batman quickly became an obsession. Soon, Uslan was dutifully purchasing every title in which the Caped Crusader appeared. "In my heart of hearts, I believed that if I studied really hard and worked out really hard, and if my dad bought me a cool car, I could *be* this guy!" Uslan remembers in his 2011 memoir, *The Boy Who Loved Batman*. By the time he was a high-school senior, he'd amassed a collection of 30,000 comic books.

In 1972, the College of Arts and Sciences at Indiana University, Bloomington, offered an experimental program allowing students to pitch entirely new classes for credit. As a junior undergrad, Uslan drew up a syllabus outlining the scholarly merits of comic books and presented it to the department's board, arguing that superheroes were modern mythological gods. The attendant dean cut him off, insisting "funny books" were entertainment for children.

Thinking quickly, Uslan, who wore a Spider-Man T-shirt to the meeting, asked the administrator to recite the story of Moses: "Moses was an endangered Hebrew infant sent to safety in a river basket and recovered by a couple who raised him as their own. Later, he became a heroic figure to his people after learning his heritage." Then Uslan asked him to recall Superman's genesis: "Superman was an endangered Krypton son sent to safety by his parents in a rocket ship, then recovered by a couple who raised"—there, the dean cut himself off, and the 20-year-old became the world's first professor of a college-accredited comic-books course.



The United Press International ran a story about Uslan's course, and soon he was fielding television and radio requests from around the globe. Journalists were sitting in his class, which became so popular that the university asked Uslan to adapt it into a correspondence course. They even paid him to write a textbook on the subject. DC Comics also called. The company's execs had heard Uslan on the radio and wanted to offer him a job. He could work in DC's Manhattan office in the summer; during his senior year, they'd keep him on retainer. Uslan was beside himself.

Before graduating, Uslan sent 372 résumés to industry names he'd found while scouring *Variety*, hoping to land a position working in movies or television cartoons. The responses—all two of them—were dismal. Discouraged, Uslan applied to law school, calculating it as a backdoor to Hollywood, and funded his further education (along with his wedding to his college sweetheart) by selling 20,000 comics from his collection.

After law school, he took a position in the legal department of movie studio United Artists, where he drafted contracts for smashes like *Raging Bull, Apocalypse Now,* and *Rocky.* He also busied himself plotting out his purchase of the rights to *Batman*.

The world wasn't cooperating, though. The DC exec who'd hired him back in college advised Uslan not to waste the money. *Batman* was considered a "dead brand." After ABC canceled the TV show, the Caped Crusader's merchandising sales took a nosedive and never recovered. Warner Publishing had recently negotiated the deal for *Superman: The Movie,* and would expect the same pricey terms, even though *Batman* was worth less.

But Uslan wouldn't be talked out of his dream. He convinced the father of a co-worker, former MGM executive Benjamin Melniker, of the project's commercial potential, and in October 1979, after six months of negotiation, against all advice or logic, the production partners acquired *Batman*'s film rights for a reported $50,000. Uslan immediately quit his day job.

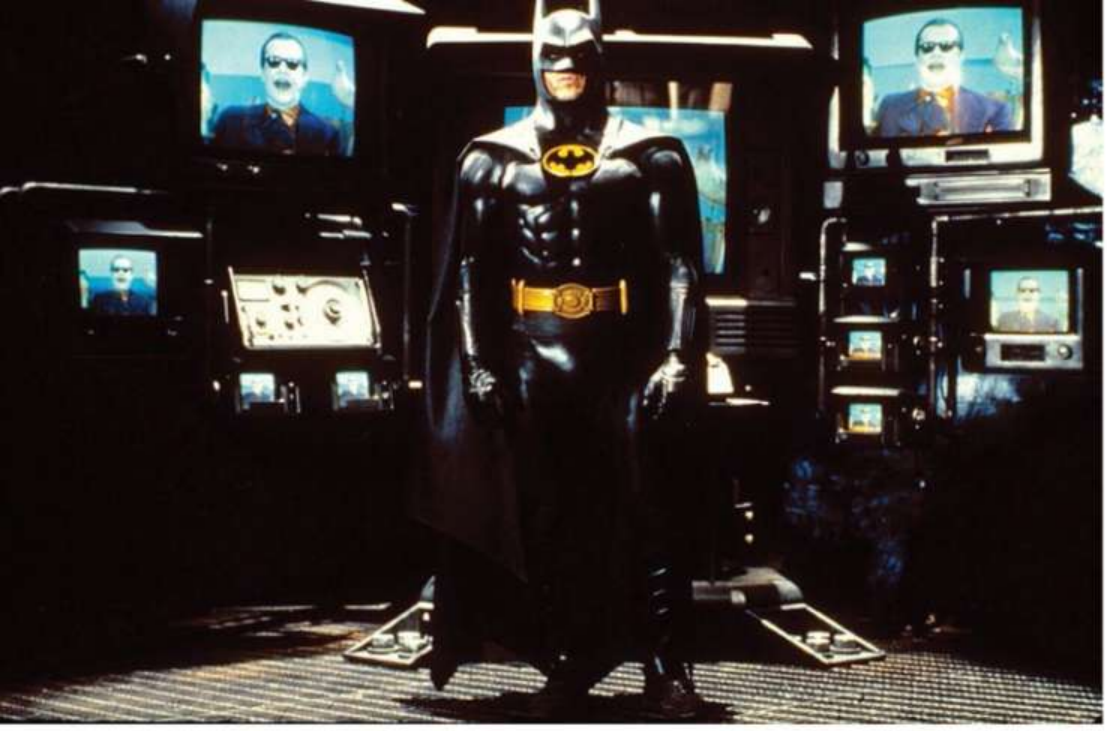
THAT YEAR, THE PARTNERS started pitching Hollywood studios. One by one, each declined. Execs told Uslan that he was crazy: Outdated TV shows weren't being remade into movies. Besides, this was TV's cheesiest character. How could this story be turned into a serious film? *Superman*'s success proved superheroes needed to be pure and almighty (not dark and internally conflicted).

Eventually, Uslan and Melniker signed a deal to make *Batman* with the producers behind *Midnight Express* and *A Star Is Born*—but they still couldn't get a studio on board. Meanwhile, Uslan needed cash to get by, so he and Melniker got a different project off the ground: *Swamp Thing*, a popcorn flick featuring a rubber-suited monster.

The movie was a success, which only strengthened Uslan's resolve. "You could either chalk it up to stubbornness or abject stupidity," he says now, "but every time my back was against the wall, I went back to that one question: 'Is the rest of the world right and I'm wrong, and I'm just being stubborn?' Or do I truly believe in this? I kept coming up with [the answer]: 'This is the right way.'"

The right way demanded years of conversations about distribution, contracts, and filmmakers. *Gremlins* director Joe Dante was attached to the project, and then he wasn't. Ivan Reitman was on board, as they waited for him to finish

ALAMY



Uslan set out to undo the hokey 1960s TV version of Batman, as played by Adam West (far left). Michael Keaton (left) was cast in the darker 1989 film adaptation.

Ghostbusters—and then he wasn't. At one point, Uslan's former intern urged him to stop telling people about the project because it made him sound like a joke.

By 1986, *Swamp Thing*'s earnings were dwindling. Uslan—now in his thirties, with two children—bet everything on his next undertaking, a historical miniseries for CBS pegged to the Texas Revolution's sesquicentennial. When executive reshuffling killed the project, Uslan stubbornly insisted he was less than six months away from securing enough money to tide him over until a studio signed on to make *Batman* a reality. His father-in-law made him a deal: He'd pay the family's bills for five months, but if his son-in-law didn't have that six-figure paycheck by the end of the grace period, Uslan would return to practicing law and stop this *Batman* nonsense. "That was my lowest moment," he says. He accepted the deal.

As the clock ticked, Uslan grasped for salable ideas. Then one day, he had an epiphany: *What about dinosaurs from outer space?* The kid-friendly lightning bolt resulted in *Dinosaucers*, a 1987 animated television series that provided just enough cash to get by. On the exact date of his father-in-law's deadline, a paycheck came to his house.

AROUND THE TIME USLAN MADE that last-ditch deal with his father-in-law, a graphic novelist named Frank Miller published a new Batman title called *The Dark Knight Returns*. It revived the darker, grittier origins of Batman that Uslan loved. Other people were drawn to it too: It was an instant, huge success, breaking out of comic book shops into mainstream bookstores. Suddenly, the appeal of a dark Batman didn't seem so far-fetched.

By this time, the producers with whom Uslan and Melniker had partnered were signed to Warner Bros., and an imaginative director who'd recently worked on Warner Bros.' *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* was also interested. His name was Tim Burton, and his second project for the studio, the one that could give him the credibility to make a big, expensive tentpole movie, was right around the corner: *Beetlejuice*. (It starred Michael Keaton, who the director thought was versatile enough to play Batman too.) Burton had a script inspired by *The Dark Knight Returns*, and he approached Sam Hamm, a 31-year-old Warner Bros. screenwriter (and longtime Batman fan), about working on it. Finally, the stars had aligned. *Batman* got the green light for pre-production in the spring of 1988. In October, the movie went into production.

THE PARTNERS STARTED PITCHING HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS. EACH DECLINED.

ON JUNE 23, 1989—almost a decade after Uslan and Melniker obtained the rights—*Batman* opened, starring Keaton as the title character, Jack Nicholson as the Joker (Uslan's idea), and Gotham City as a steaming apocalypse of metropolitan corruption. Anticipation was so high people smashed the glass at bus stops to steal the poster, even if—in a twist of delicious irony—diehard Batman fans fretted that Keaton, known as a comic actor, was too goofy to play Batman. Those fears soon proved unfounded. In its opening weekend, *Batman* raked in a record-breaking $43.6 million.

Batman's cultural impact was enormous. In November, Uslan watched the Berlin Wall fall on CNN and saw a boy in the wreckage wearing a *Batman* hat. "This had become more than just a movie," he writes. "It was, indeed, revolutionary." In North America, the film was the highest-grossing movie of 1989.

Over the next decade, follow-ups rained down with varied success (Uslan has a producer credit on all of them). The choice to hire auteur Christopher Nolan to reboot the franchise was, according to Uslan, "a godsend for hardcore fanboys, as well as mainstream audiences around the world." Nolan's gothic *Dark Knight* trilogy (2005's *Batman Begins*, 2008's *The Dark Knight*, 2012's *The Dark Knight Rises*) accomplished the nearly impossible feat of achieving both critical and commercial acclaim, depicting Bruce Wayne as a psychologically complex figure and pulling in nearly $2.5 billion worldwide.

Next year brings *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*, which Uslan and Melniker executive produced. "My greatest wish is that I could have a narrow tube into the past, so I could yell to Michael at age 8, 12, 16, and 20: 'Hey, guess what I'm doing?!'" says Uslan, now 64. "But I know in my heart of hearts I always believed."

He also believed that the world needed new role models. The Golden Age of comics took place during World War II, when Americans were desperate for stories of good overcoming evil. As the 20th century progressed, they'd realize the enemy wasn't simply abroad, but sometimes within. Someone larger than life had to embody existential conflicts over justice, selflessness, and purpose. Uslan had known this since he was a teenager: Batman might not be the superhero everybody wanted, but he was the one that would speak to a new generation.

The Worst Bosses in History

YOURS DOESN'T EVEN COME CLOSE.

BY A.J. JACOBS

THE DEVIL MAY WEAR PRADA. But the devil also wears bowler hats, togas, and codpieces. In other words, history is overflowing with horrible bosses, many of whom would make Miranda Priestly look like a softy.

Let's start with the Control Freak Boss. First prize goes to 19th-century railroad baron George Pullman, whose company manufactured sleeping cars. He built an Orwellian town for his workers to live in, complete with schools and a church, but no fun stuff (like taverns or nonsanctioned newspapers). His inspectors would march into homes to make sure they'd been properly cleaned. Pullman even replaced American currency with Pullman money, so he could control the prices of food, rent, and supplies. As one unhappy worker put it, "We are born in a Pullman house, fed from the Pullman shops, taught in the Pullman school, catechized in the Pullman Church, and when we die we shall go to the Pullman Hell." When workers staged a strike in 1894, Pullman refused to negotiate, and the crisis spiraled, leading to gunfire and the death of several workers.

Then there's the Sadistic Boss. Consider Caligula. According to Roman historian Suetonius, the emperor (who ruled from 37 to 41 CE) sawed his subordinates in half, tossed them to the beasts, threw them in cages, branded them, flogged them, disemboweled them, and condemned them to work in the mines; sometimes the punishments were simply for criticizing his gladiator shows. That's not to mention daily humiliations his staff endured. According to Suetonius's book *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars,* Caligula's highest-ranking senators were forced to "run in their togas for several miles beside his chariot and to wait on him at table, standing napkin in hand."

The Machine Age produced loads of sadistic bosses. Max Blanck and Isaac Harris, owners of the Triangle Waist Company in New York, paid terrible wages to immigrant women and girls. To quell a strike, they hired female prostitutes to beat up the mostly female workforce on the picket line. In 1911, they reached a new level of villainy. A fire broke out in the factory, but the women couldn't escape because the doors had been locked. The fire killed 146 workers. The families of the deceased sued and were awarded $75 per person. Meanwhile, Blanck and Harris earned $400 per person from their insurance company.

Other sadists: The bosses of the "radium girls." In the early 1920s, hundreds of young women spent their days in a factory painting watch dials with glow-in-the-dark paint. They were even urged to sharpen paintbrush hairs between their lips. The paint was so radioactive that they suffered a host of ills, like bone fractures, eroded jaws, and anemia. The bosses of the U.S. Radium Corporation tried to cover this up, accusing the women of having syphilis, but a group of them sued, and eventually won $10,000 each.

Not nearly as horrible but still infuriating is the Credit Hog Boss. A prime example: scientist Jonas Salk (yes, the man who helped develop the polio vaccine). In 1955, Salk gave a press conference that was both historic (a terrible disease had been cured) and notorious (he failed to mention his many collaborators). According to Wharton professor Adam Grant's book *Give and Take*, Salk's team left the conference in tears. He'd failed to give credit to his peers, and one of his scientists, Julius Younger, blasted Salk for doing "the most uncollegial thing that you can imagine."

CALIGULA HAD HIS SENATORS RUN IN TOGAS FOR MILES BESIDE HIS CHARIOT.

The Frisky Boss has been a cliché since the dawn of reproduction. If you believe the Bible, King David was severely lacking in impulse control. The ancient monarch fell in lust with a woman named Bathsheba after spotting her taking a bath. Being the king, he bedded her and got her pregnant. The glitch? She was already married to one of King David's soldiers, Uriah. So King David sent Uriah on a fatal mission.

Let's wrap it up with some Ungrateful Bosses. Louis XIV liked his butt kissed—but only to a point. His finance minister Nicolas Fouquet threw a lavish party in the king's honor. Annoyed by the huge amount of money his employee had spent, Louis had him imprisoned the next day for embezzling. Fouquet spent the rest of his life in solitary confinement.

Then there's Ivan the Terrible. In Russian, his nickname is actually closer to "Ivan the Formidable." But rest assured, he did lots of awful things to his employees, including throwing an insubordinate aristocrat to a pack of dogs—when he was 13 years old! And that's not to mention his demand for a piping-hot latte on his desk every day when he arrived (with two raw sugars and almond milk).

ILLUSTRATION BY LUC MELANSON

A Formal Undertaking

HOW MORTICIANS REINVENTED THE HUMBLE JOB TITLE

BY ARIKA OKRENT

CERTAIN PROFESSIONS have a built-in PR problem. People don't like to think about what janitors or garbage collectors do, so they substitute bland job titles with euphemisms like *custodial technician* and *waste management engineer*. Not that these titles are fooling anyone. We scoff and roll our eyes at *mixologist* (bartender), *scooping technician* (dog walker), and *dynamic optimization analyst* (who knows?). But another term got its start the same way, and we hardly notice it anymore: the word *mortician*.

It has a fancy, classical Latin feel to it, right? In 1895, when it was first proposed in the trade magazine *The Embalmers' Monthly*, members of the newly burgeoning funeral director profession thought so too. It was more customer-friendly than *undertaker*, which originally referred to the contractor who undertakes all the funeral arrangements, but had become tarnished by its centuries-old association with, well, death.

During the Civil War, the practice of embalming became widespread. Before that, the technique had been mostly used in medical schools to preserve cadavers for research. But after President Lincoln's body was embalmed for his 13-day funeral procession from D.C. to Illinois, it became a general funeral custom, and thus, an increasingly professionalized commercial industry.

The practitioners wanted to distinguish themselves from the undertakers of the past, and they needed a new name. So *Embalmers' Monthly* put out a call for suggestions. The next month they declared *mortician* the winner: It elegantly combined the Latin root for death, *mort-*, with *physician*, referencing embalming's scientific, high-status connection with the medical profession. Of course, everyone except the morticians hated it.

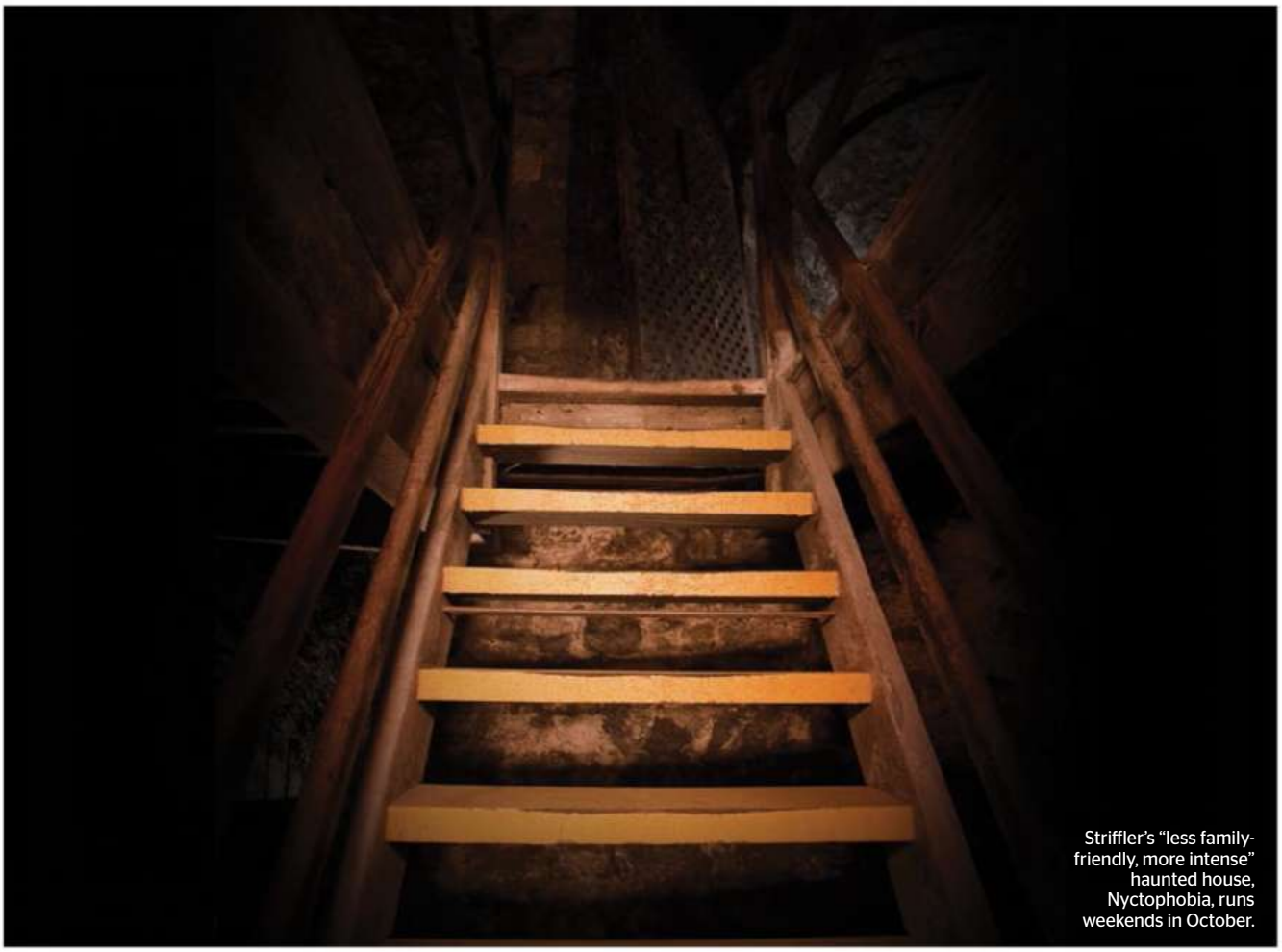
Decades later, critics were still calling the word "ugly," "affected," and an "atrocity" of euphemism. *Mortician* was an "uncouth stranger" and a "pseudo-Latinism of dubious currency." The *Chicago Tribune* banned it, and "not for lack of sympathy with the ambition of undertakers to be well regarded but because of it. If they haven't the sense to save themselves from their own lexicographers, we shall not be guilty of abetting them in their folly."

UNTIL *MORTICIAN*, THERE WAS NO *-ICIAN* WORD ENDING.

Mortician seemed inflated and ridiculous; worse, it violated rules of word formation. Until *mortician*, there was no *–ician* word ending. *Physician* came from *physic* + *ian*, *mathematician* from *mathematic* + *ian*. *Obstetrician, electrician, optician, statistician*—all those prestigious words had a word ending in *–ic* as a base. What was *mortics*? There was no such thing. *Mortician* was an impostor.

Yet *mortician* refused to fade away or kick the bucket. Not only did the word stick around until people forgot it was once one of those pretentious made-up job titles, it gave life to the use of *–ician* as an ending of its own. Many of the titles created in the wake of mortician didn't last long—there was *bootician* (bootlegger), *boozician* (a drunk), *shoetrician* (shoe repairer), *fizzician* (soda jerk), *radiotrician* (radio repairer), and other jokey coinages. But one of them is still with us today: *beautician*. It makes sense. What the beautician enhances in life, the mortician preserves in death. And what is *mortician* if not a long-lived makeover for *undertaker*?

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN-PATRICK THOMAS



Striffler's "less family-friendly, more intense" haunted house, Nyctophobia, runs weekends in October.

Don't Say a Word

AND OTHER TIPS FROM **ERIC STRIFFLER,** THE DIRECTOR BEHIND ONE OF AMERICA'S MOST TERRIFYING HAUNTED HOUSES

BY JEFF RUBIN[1]

What makes Nyctophobia, your haunted house in Long Island, unique?
It's a mix of promenade theater, where you're walking around a space and interacting with actors, and a scavenger hunt. It's not just walking through a maze with people in masks jumping out at you. *Nyctophobia* means extreme fear of night or the darkness. In the first two years, 2010 and 2011, our house was mostly pitch-black. In 2012, we rented rooms at this creepy motel and had people go room to room. We had this storyline about a girl being murdered, and they had to solve the murder. In 2013, it was out in the woods. In 2014, we brought it back inside. We're testing the limits of what we can do around Halloween.

What happened to you when you were a kid that made you want to do this?
I started going to a fantastic haunted house on Long Island called the Spooky Walk. When I was maybe 12 years old, I was trying to get a job there.

I'm fascinated by the idea of this 12-year-old kid who wanted to work at a haunted house.
A lot of people watch a scary movie and don't want to do it again. I loved the thrill knowing it's not real. With a haunted house, you can be scared in a safe environment. It's basically the same as a horror movie, or watching *Goosebumps* or *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* I wanted to inflict that feeling on other people.

ALAMY

How old were you when you started working at a haunted house?
I was 13 or 14. I grabbed a mask at Party City, brought some friends, and we just scared people in the woods. The next year I thought, "I'm going to branch off." We set up an electric chair in the woods. It became a staple. Over the years we added a cross that a scarecrow could go on. It would jump off and scare you. We had a chainsaw shack. We had all the tropes that have almost become [haunted house] clichés—but clichés in a good way. Then we said, "Let's do stuff that isn't being done."

What wasn't being done?
I'd never seen one where you have to go in alone. I heard about something like that in New York City called Blackout Haunted House. I checked it out and loved it. So we started doing it on Long Island, which is a totally different market.

What's the difference between a traditional haunted house and what you're doing?
Traditionally, you have a group of friends going in together, conga-lining through, clinging to each other, having a good time. Someone in a monster mask jumps out and scares them. Everyone screams, laughs, and moves on to the next room. There are cool effects: Some sort of animatronic or a pneumatic thing jumps out from a window. Then of course there's a chainsaw guy. The new thing is less about fun and more about truly being scared. When you're going in alone, you're not laughing with your friends. It takes out that element of comfort. The other aspect is that it's hands-on.

What makes a haunted house scary?
If you're walking through a pitch-black maze and someone grabs your arm or leg, it's going to scare you. The element of the unknown is big. Some people are afraid of spiders, so we might have a room where it feels like there are spiders on you. There's no tried-and-true formula to scare someone, so we throw in a bunch of different things and hope something lands.

THE ELEMENT OF THE UNKNOWN IS BIG. THERE'S NO FORMULA TO SCARE SOMEONE.

I like your drive to push things forward.
It's an interactive theatrical experience. I want to affect people after they leave. Last year, we took Polaroid photos of one person in each group. In the woods there were hunter characters that came out and said, "What are you doing in my woods?" They would search the people and slip the Polaroid in someone's pocket, and then at the end of the night the person would say, "How the hell did this get here?" We'd also slip it in their car while it was unattended. We had people telling us months later that they'd found it.

Do you make money on this?
Nyctophobia has never made a profit. People look at me like I have six heads when I tell them that. As long as I break even, I'm fine. We're doing it to show people a great time.

Why do you think people go to haunted houses?
The first group—the traditional group—wants to have fun. The other group, which goes to the intense houses, wants to get scared. They want you to push them to the limit and to be terrified. Mine is in the middle, because I still come from a place where I remember being younger and going to the haunted house with the girl I think is cute and thinking she's going to hold my hand because she's scared.

What kind of tools do you use to scare people?
We do something different every year. One of the actors came up with this great psychological scare: They blindfolded this person in the dark and said, "Walk forward ... Keep walking forward ... Now stop. Oh my God, you almost fell! You almost walked right off of that ledge!" And then they gave them a big shove. The people scream because they actually believe there's a ledge.

I got a little scared just hearing that story.
In 2010 and 2011, we had people close their eyes and then we sprayed them in the face with a little spurt of water. It gets your heart racing. I don't think it's that far from the classic Halloween party gag where you blindfold someone and they reach into some grapes and you tell them it's eyeballs.

I read an article about Nyctophobia in *Scareworld Magazine*. You guys have magazines?
It's one of the many magazines catering to people who want to read about this stuff. Another is *HauntWorld Magazine*, and there's also one called *Top Haunts Magazine* that comes out quarterly.

What would a typical story be in one of those magazines?
"How to Make the Best Fake Blood" or "How to Scare the Person That's Most Difficult to Scare."

Is it harder to scare people now?
You have to always change it up. That's the one problem with a lot of traditional haunted houses: They don't change it up enough, and eventually people say, "This is pretty much the same thing every year."

Do you ever get to experience your own haunted house as a visitor?
Like with any show, you do a run-through and then the director gives notes. I'd go through each room and say, "You did this. Could you do it more like this?" It's ingrained in our brains to do the traditional thing: saying "boo" or using a creepy voice. I'd tell them, "Don't say a word. Just brush their neck in the dark." It works better that way. Then at the end, I went through again and actually felt like I was going through a new experience and didn't know the ins and outs of it.

Do you ever get scared when you go?
I'm the type of guy who still turns the lights out in the basement and runs up the stairs, because I don't know what the heck is down there that's going to chase me. You'd think that isn't possible because I do this, but I jump out of my skin. I scream. I get scared and then immediately think to myself, "Hell yeah, that was great." I hope I never lose that.

[1] Host of *The Jeff Rubin Jeff Rubin Show* (jeffrubinjeffrubinshow.com); terrified of ferns

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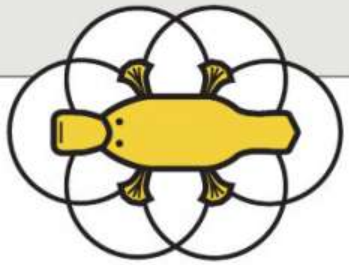
2015 PLATYPUS AWARDS

Innovations in Taste

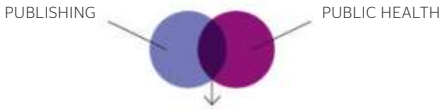


We like to think of the platypus as a superhero of the animal kingdom.

It takes the best elements of the duck, the beaver, and the otter and rolls them into one egg-laying, venom-possessing badass: a creature so remarkable that when researchers first discovered it, they thought they were being pranked.

Our annual Platypus Awards honor ideas that draw from disparate fields to form something worthy of a double take. It's not just these little ideas that captivate us, but also their world-changing potential for awesomeness.

This year, we honor nine innovators who are turning our notions of food upside down. We all need to eat. But these trailblazers are demonstrating how, with a little ingenuity, the grub before us also has the power to right social wrongs, bring communities closer, and, potentially, save the world. Now that's something to chew on.



The Cookbook Crusader

The high cost of a good diet inspired **Leanne Brown** to rewrite the recipe for cookbooks.

It's not hard to see why so many Americans opt for preprepared food: It seems cheap, simple, and quick. This, of course, is despite the wisdom (repeated by everyone from doctors to chefs to public health advocates) that cooking for yourself is healthier. For many people, that's easier said than done: Cookbooks can seem like exercises in fantasy. The cost of creating the recipes typically goes unmentioned. And if you don't know what you're doing, a trip to the grocery store could get pricey, fast.

Leanne Brown, 30, doesn't think home cooking should be a luxury. Indeed, for lots of people, it can't be: Fifteen percent of Americans rely on food stamps, with their average budget amounting to just a little more than $4 a day. And while there are some cookbooks for this demographic, when Brown perused them she found a lot of hot dogs, macaroni, and clip art. Little of their real estate was devoted to fresh veggies, healthy recipes, or making the meals appealing.

So, for her master's thesis project in food studies at New York University, the former public health professional started writing her own cookbook. It includes a collection of recipes for all types of meals in a variety of cuisine styles, and is designed for chefs of all skill levels (including those who've never cooked). Illustrated with beautiful, high-quality photographs, the recipes are easy to follow, inexpensive to shop for, and delicious—everything from banana pancakes to shrimp and grits to peach coffee cake.

She called it *Good & Cheap*. After it was completed in 2014, there was just one thing to do: get it into the hands of the people who needed it most. So, Brown offered the cookbook online for free. Then the project went viral. After hundreds of thousands of downloads, her Kickstarter campaign funded a print run (which included a buy-one-get-a-second-copy-donated charity component), followed by a second run in July 2015. At this rate, all of America should be digesting Brown's message of culinary empowerment in no time. **—MAGGIE KOERTH-BAKER**

PHOTOGRAPH BY **DAVID WILLIAMS**

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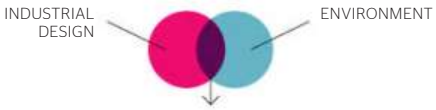


A Fresh Take on Food Waste

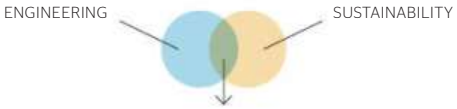
Solveiga Pakštaitė is reimagining the sell-by date—a feat that could save tons of food.

Most of us rely on expiration dates to know whether our groceries are still fresh. But as British-based industrial designer Solveiga Pakštaitė learned when she interviewed blind people for a project on public transportation, if you can't see, you can't read those dates.

The revelation inspired the 23-year-old to design the Bump Mark, a series of raised bumps coated with a layer of gelatin on food packaging. As the gelatin protein decays, the bumps become tangible. That's when you know the food is past its prime. This works because gelatin—made from animal hooves—rots at roughly the same rate as a steak, fish fillet, or bag of salad.

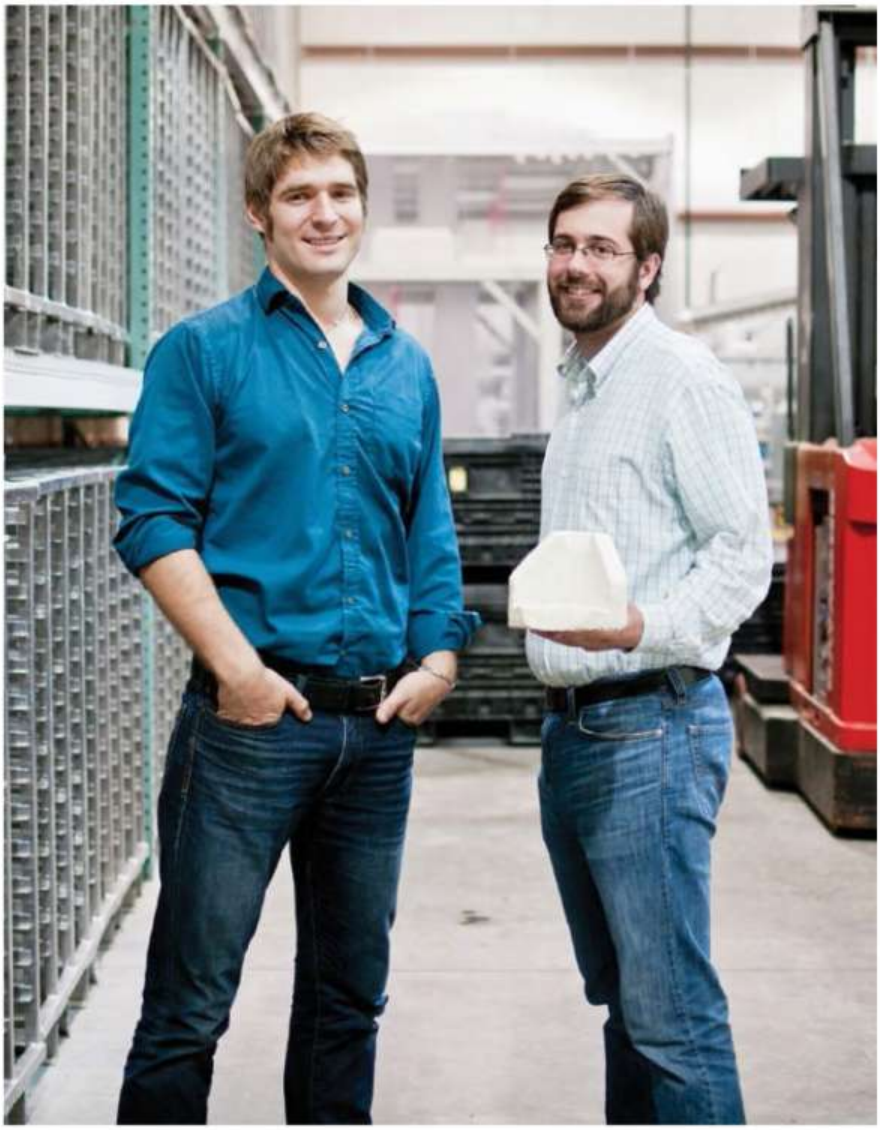
The potential for this technology is even greater than what you might think. Printed dates are just guidelines, not true indicators of food spoilage, so we waste a lot of perfectly good food. (In the U.K., grocery stores and consumers throw away a total of 12 million tons of food every year.) Because the Bump Mark measures real rates of decay, the invention could help fix that. Pakštaitė is now doing market research, studying manufacturing, and running lab tests to increase the accuracy of the gelatin-to-food decay rate. From a fresh idea, fresh food. **—MKB**

PHOTOGRAPH BY **CHRIS FLOYD**



Will the Future Be Made Out of Mushrooms?

Eben Bayer *and* **Gavin McIntyre**
grow their own industry.



Some people look at mushrooms and see shish kebabs and pizza toppings. Eben Bayer and Gavin McIntyre, 30, look at them and see the end of plastic. The engineers are using fungi to make packaging material, automotive parts, insulation, and surfboards. Their products could someday replace Styrofoam. They've even developed mushroom circuits—which can conduct electricity—by bonding fungus with metals.

At their upstate New York headquarters, the team takes agricultural waste, like rice husks and cottonseed hulls, and packs it into a mold. They add mycelium—the microscopic rootlike branches that provide the foundation for the bodies of mushrooms—and wait five days. The waste hardens into a sustainable, fire-resistant bioplastic. The mycelium does most of the work, consuming far less energy than traditional plastics.

In January, the duo's company, Ecovative Design, released a DIY kit. "People kept calling with suggestions of what we could make with the material, and it got really distracting," they say. "We decided to let people do it themselves so we could focus." For the humble fungus, it's a star-making turn. **—MKB**

HOW TO HACK YOUR TASTE BUDS

New research shows that our senses of sight, hearing, smell, and touch are just as important as the ingredients in your favorite recipe.

BY **MARK JOHANSON**

1

Freshen up fish with beach sounds.
People chowing on seafood perceive stronger flavors when they hear the seashore, according to research by chef Heston Blumenthal and Oxford professor Charles Spence. It even works if the waves crash from an iPod!

2

Add salt with savory smells.
Using samples of beef bouillon, scientists at Unilever showed that savory aromas improved the flavor of potassium salt replacers. Tasters noticed no change of flavor, even though dishes had 30 percent less salt.

3

Bring whisky drinkers a shot of nature.
In a 2013 study, researchers found that people drinking single malts in a green-lit room with a soundtrack of bird noises described their taste as "grassy," while people in a wooden room by a fire found it "oakier."

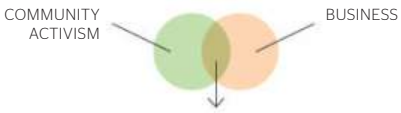
4

Cut corners when serving chocolate.
A recent study sponsored by Nestlé found that curved chocolate bars enhance that melt-in-your-mouth feeling. Nestlé calls it "mouth geometry": Curves, not squares, are a comfier fit for your oral cavity.

5

Change tastes with plate tectonics.
Strawberry mousse on a white plate was sweeter than the same dessert on a black plate, experiments at El Bulli's test kitchen in Spain showed. Round plates accentuated sweetness, while heavy plates intensified flavors.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NATT PHENJATI



The Coffee Guru Brewing Social Change

Keba Konte *is an entrepreneur who doesn't count beans, but makes his beans count.*

Coffee's relationship with social justice usually starts and ends with a buzzy label on a bag of beans (think terms like *responsibly sourced*). Community activist and café owner Keba Konte, 48, is looking to change that by adopting a new business model that emphasizes equal opportunities, second chances, and a stronger community for all.

Konte's career has included everything from photojournalism (he covered Nelson Mandela's 1994 election in South Africa) to aquaponics to the popular coffee shops he owns in Oakland, California. He's also an artist: Earlier this year, he created a series of murals by spray-painting on chain-link fences, then enlisting community members to cover them with thousands of pieces of ribbon to produce massive, striking portraits. His latest business venture, Red Bay Coffee Company, is born of the same ethos. Red Bay hires and trains the formerly incarcerated and other people who may have trouble finding jobs because of their race, socioeconomic status, weight, or disabilities.

At Red Bay's soon-to-open café housed in a shipping container, Konte's employees will be paid minimum wage, plus tips, plus a monthly bonus figured by splitting the shop's profits among its workers. It's not quite a co-op because, as with the murals, Konte is the one making final decisions and establishing the vision. But, also like the murals, the coffee shop is a community project, and it's the community—and the workers—who benefit. If you're working in one of his shops, "you're working together and you don't really see what you're doing until you back up and it's done," Konte says. That's a job with perks. **—MKB**

THE TRUTH ABOUT COFFEE

Is it good or bad for you? We corralled some of the biggest academic and professional studies to find out. Turns out, it's complicated.

BY **JENN WOOD**

Drinking four or more cups a day is bad ...
"A positive association between coffee consumptions and all-cause mortality was observed in men and in women younger than 55 years."
—MAYO CLINIC, 2013

... but great for your liver!
Drinking four cups may "reduce fatty liver in people with nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD)."
—*HEPATOLOGY*, 2013

Hmm. But maybe kinda bad for your heart ...
"Individuals [with] a genetic variation associated with slower caffeine metabolism appear to have an increased risk of nonfatal heart attack ... with higher amounts of coffee intake."
—*JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION*, 2006

Wait. Maybe it's good for your heart?
" ... moderate coffee consumption was associated with a lower prevalence of subclinical coronary atherosclerosis."
—*HEART*, 2015

OK. Let's just say decaf is bad for your heart.
"Decaffeinated coffee may cause an increase in harmful LDL cholesterol by increasing a ... type of blood fat linked to the metabolic syndrome."
—AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION, 2005

But coffee may lower your risk of stroke.
"People who drank ... coffee daily had approximately 20-30 percent lower risk for one type of stroke ... "
—*STROKE: JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION*, 2013

The bad news: It may *increase* your risk of stroke ...
"We identified ... eight trigger factors for aneurysmal rupture ... The highest population-attributable risks were found for coffee consumption (10.6 percent)."
—*STROKE: JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION*, 2011

... and abusing it can lead to depression.
"Excessive consumption [can] lead to ... anxiety, depression, frequency of psychophysiological disorders, and possibly degraded performance."
—*ADVANCES IN ALCOHOL & SUBSTANCE ABUSE*, 1984

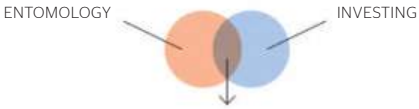
But moderate coffee-drinking might make you less depressed!
"The risk of depression [was] 20 percent lower among women who drank four or more cups of coffee ... "
—*ARCHIVES OF INTERNAL MEDICINE*, 2011

The conclusion?
Coffee is delicious!
—*MENTAL_FLOSS*, 2015

PHOTOGRAPH BY **ANGELA DECENZO**

2015 PLATYPUS AWARDS

Innovations in Taste



The Edible Insect Entrepreneur

According to **Harman Singh Johar**, *eating bugs will be the next big thing.*

The first time Harman Singh Johar ate a cricket, he was an undergrad at the University of Georgia. It was supposed to be barbecue-flavored, but it tasted more like dust and sadness. "It was dry and pointy, and the flavor was like something that had sat in a gas station for three years," says the 24-year-old. But where others saw a gag gift gone wrong, Johar saw room for improvement. He knew insects are high in protein and nutrients, and consume fewer resources than livestock—pound for pound, cricket meat requires 1/500th the water and 1/1,000th of the land needed to farm cattle. Johar also knew none of that matters if people won't eat bugs. So, ever since, he's dedicated his career to making bug meat marketable.

In 2010, he founded a successful insect wholesale company, World Entomophagy, worked with another company to use automation to lower the cost of insect farming in the U.S., and currently serves as a consultant to various bug-meat businesses that have sprouted up in recent years. Still, he faces an uphill battle: While insect supply chains exist all over the world, it isn't exactly a short order to get Americans to see bugs as a viable food source. But the fact is, they are. Johar has two words to describe the future: cricket flour. Flavorless and without an off-putting texture, it'll eventually be used to add protein to energy bars and other foods, he explains, making a balanced, nutrient-rich diet more accessible and less costly to you and the world you live in. In fact, in Austin, where Johar lives, you can already buy bars made with "powder of insects." **—MKB**

4 INNOVATIONS COMING TO YOUR LOCAL GROCERY

How we'll superpower the supermarkets of the future

BY **JENN WOOD**

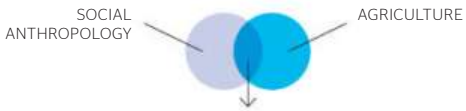
Eggs without the chicken
Philosophers can stop bickering about which came first. Hampton Creek Foods has developed a lab-made, chickenless egg substitute that can already be found on the market in mayo and cookie dough.

Virtual reality munchies
Someday, we might reduce our caloric intake while looking like the Terminator. Virtual reality gurus are working on a headset, food detection sensor, and aromatic diffuser to create a simulated dining experience.

Civet coffee, but with less poop
The only way to make kopi luwak coffee used to be with beans that have traveled through a civet's digestive tract. But food scientists have discovered a fermentation process that mimics the taste without the dirty work.

Super-smart ovens
The computer-based June Intelligent Oven promises to heat food perfectly each time. An internal camera figures out what you're cooking, and the oven uses algorithms to calculate the best cooking temperature and time. At $1,500, it's still cheaper than a personal chef.

PHOTOGRAPH BY **BEN SKLAR**



The Anthropologist Working to Save Chocolate

For **Carla Martin,** the only thing better than the taste is enjoying it in good conscience.

Generally, we refrain from focusing on bad news, but this is serious: Chocolate is in crisis, and that means terrible things for your candy bars. Because the cacao plant is in increasingly short supply, producers like Cadbury are reducing the size of their treats. Quality is suffering as well, as cacao-derived cocoa butter, which gives chocolate its creamy taste, is replaced with cheaper, palm oil–based substitutes. The roots of the problem are tangled: Plant diseases, droughts, and cacao genetics are just a few. But not all of these problems are governed strictly by nature—some are man-made, and Carla Martin, a 34-year-old social anthropologist at Harvard, spends her days looking for answers.

Martin's research concerns a major element of the crisis: Nobody wants to be a cacao farmer anymore. In Ghana, many farmers have never even tasted the chocolate their work yields. Worse, they make the equivalent of $0.30 a day, tending to crops with just their bare hands and a machete. "The median age is hovering around 50," Martin says, "and most don't want their children to go into the business." What would happen, she wondered, if the conditions for cacao farming improved?

To find out, she's been documenting the nuanced effects of Fair Trade, Direct Trade, and similar certifications. She says part of the solution lies in giving Ghanaian farmers more control in supply lines so they can deal directly with the producers making chocolate. She also suggests that pay scales tied to the quality of cacao and the chocolate it produces would result in the proliferation of better chocolate (even if it also results in consumers paying more for their candy). The bottom line: Farmers with more control are happier farmers, which leads to more cacao in the market, and, ultimately, bigger, tastier treats for us all. **—MKB**

PHOTOGRAPH BY **IAN MACLELLAN**

HEALTH CARE

METALLURGY

How a Metal Fish Revived a Village

For **Christopher Charles,** *fighting anemia is (and isn't) a drop in the bucket.*

When Christopher Charles, 30, arrived in rural Cambodia from Guelph, Ontario, he was shocked to see villagers lying exhausted on the ground. The public health researcher had come to study the effects of anemia on the population, and here they were: Fatigued children were dropping out of school; adults were convalescing beneath their stilted houses, too tired to work.

The World Heath Organization estimates 50 percent of the world's anemia is caused by iron deficiency, which is often caused by malnourishment. Good treatments are hard to find. Iron supplements are expensive and can have nasty side effects. And while food cooked in cast-iron pots absorbs iron, its release is unpredictable and the pots rust easily. What if, Charles thought, there were a lump of iron that people could drop into boiling water? The water could then be used for cooking or drinking. Inspired, Charles shaped an ingot into a smiling fish called a *try kantrop,* an important food source beloved by Cambodians as a symbol of luck.

Six months after distributing the first batch of these iron fish, Charles was amazed by what he saw: people starting their own small businesses and children playing in the street. Blood tests revealed a 50 percent drop in anemia. Ninety percent of the villagers who'd gotten the fish were using them!

Today, a plant employing Cambodian workers makes Lucky Iron Fish out of recycled scrap metal. The project has distributed fish to more than 10,000 families, changing the lives of more than 50,000 people. It's proof of the old adage: It is possible to make your own luck. **—KATE HOROWITZ**

2015 PLATYPUS AWARDS

Innovations in Taste

8 HIGHLY DUBIOUS INNOVATIONS IN TASTE

In September 2014, Lufthansa airlines began delivering its reheatable meals to people on the ground. Which is why not *every* idea gets a Platypus Award.

BY **GABE LUZIER**

UGH!

Sugar of Lead: Third Century
When sweeteners like honey were in short supply, Romans boiled grape juice in lead containers. The process formed lead acetate, which sweetened and preserved foods. Oh, and it also poisoned anybody who ate it. Today, it's used in hair-coloring products.

The Prolinn Diet: 1970s
People were told to eat nothing but a "miracle liquid" containing ground animal horns, hooves, cowhides, tendons, sinews, bones, and other slaughterhouse treats. More than two million people tried it—but jumped ship after learning it caused heart attacks.

Reddi-Bacon: 1964
Before microwaveable bacon, the world had pre-cooked pig you popped into the toaster. But when the bacon was heated, the fat melted and dripped onto the toaster's heating element. Over fear of grease fires, Reddi-Bacon was canceled during test marketing.

Dinitrophenol Pills: 1930s
When research showed that dinitrophenol—used to make dyes, insecticides, and explosives—raised metabolism, the compound became a "miracle" diet drug. By 1935, about 100,000 dieters had used it. The downside: It made people go blind, so it was pulled from shelves.

Kellogg's Breakfast Mates: 1998
To replicate Lunchables, Kellogg's released a breakfast kit with an aseptic box of lowfat milk. Warm milk appealed to no one, so the brand canned the product within a year.

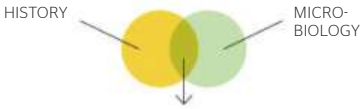
Colgate Kitchen Entrees: 1982
In a case of branding nobody asked for, toothpaste giant Colgate developed a range of frozen food, launching a pricey marketing campaign to shill (not-so-minty) TV dinners.

Pepsi A.M.: 1989
When research suggested coffee was going the way of the dodo, Pepsi threw its hat into the breakfast beverage ring, adding 28 percent more caffeine—still not half as much as coffee—to their classic product. They quickly learned Americans still preferred a cup of joe.

Gerber Singles: 1974
Thinking young adults were so hopeless in the kitchen they might be interested in eating supersized helpings of baby food, Gerber released a line of large single servings. However, no one wanted pureed beef burgundy, and the mushy meals were off the market in three months.

EH?

PHOTOGRAPH BY **JONATHAN BEILASKI**



The Nun Defending the World's Tastiest Cheeses

It's no act: **Sister Noella Marcellino,** armed with a PhD, is a fungi-loving Fulbright scholar on a mission.

When conservationists preach about preserving the earth's biodiversity, saving a whale or rhinoceros generally comes to mind. We rarely think about protecting microscopic critters, but Sister Noella Marcellino wants to change that. A Bethlehem, Connecticut–based nun, Fulbright scholar, and one of the world's leading authorities on traditional cheesemaking, she's helping save the world's most delicious cheeses—and the fungus that makes them possible.

Traditional cheeses would be nothing were it not for a rich community of microorganisms. The fungus *Geotrichum candidum,* for instance, helps make Camembert taste like Camembert. But it will only form under *just* the right conditions. All of the different parts of the microbial community have to support each other. And you need raw milk to make that happen.

But in 1985, a raw-milk cheese contaminated with listeria was blamed for 52 deaths, leading the FDA to spearhead an international ban on raw milk–based cheeses. A crackdown in favor of industrialized, processed, pasteurized cheesemaking could've wiped out the naturally flavorful fungi that made traditional cheeses possible.

So Sister Marcellino, 64, got a PhD in microbiology in order to defend the tradition with hard science. For four years, she traveled France, exploring cheese caves and collecting samples of *Geotrichum candidum*. It was landmark work—nobody had ever studied the biodiversity of these fungi before. Her research showed, and continues to show, that consuming cheese made according to the centuries-old craft is indeed safe. It's a humble reminder that a world exists beyond Velveeta and Cheez Whiz, and it's heavenly. **—MKB**

PHOTOGRAPH BY **DAVID WILLIAMS**

WINES
120
DolEx
ENVIOS DE DINERO · MONEY ORDERS
TARJETAS · BILL PAYMENTS
121
PIZZA PALACE

A SLICE OF THE PIE

In his quest to find the best pizza in the city, a New Yorker uncovers a tucked-away gem.

BY **COLIN ATROPHY HAGENDORF**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **DAVID WILLIAMS**

IN AUGUST 2009, *twentysomething Queens-based punk rocker Colin Hagendorf set out to taste every slice of cheese pizza in Manhattan and document his adventures on his blog, Slice Harvester. Along the way, he discovered a 70-year-old pizzeria called Pizza Palace. In this excerpt from his new memoir, Hagendorf explains why Pizza Palace is more than just a culinary institution. It's a meeting place rich in community, one of the few constants in an ever-evolving neighborhood.*

In order to fully understand the magic of Pizza Palace, we need to get to know John Kambouris, the man who has run the place for the past 30 years. Kambouris, who owns Pizza Palace with his brother, George, moved to New York City's Inwood neighborhood from Greece in the 1960s. He got a job as a dishwasher at a little restaurant on Broadway, then became a cook at a small diner in the Bronx, slowly crawling up the food-service food chain until 1971, when he opened his own coffee shop on Sherman Avenue. He ran that until 1986, when he bought Pizza Palace, which had originally been opened in 1945 by three brothers.

"They were guys from my home island," John told me in his slight Greek accent one afternoon when I stopped by for a slice. "The three brothers, one of them wanted to leave. He said to me, 'John, what are you doing in this coffee shop? Buy my share of the pizza parlor. Pizza—this is where you will make your money.'

"'But what do I know of pizza?' I asked him. 'Pizza is easy,' he told me. 'I will teach you.' I thought this offer over, and I have been here ever since."

He punctuated this statement with a stamp of his foot and a sweep of his arms, smiling proudly.

LIKE ANY PART OF NEW YORK, Inwood is a neighborhood with a long and complex history. Inwood Hill Park is where Peter Minuit "purchased" Manhattan from the island's indigenous people. The Dutch began settling there in the 17th century, but the only traces of their former presence are the name "Dyckman Avenue," a Dutch colonial farmhouse built in 1784 that's now a museum called the Dyckman Farmhouse, and the projects in Inwood known as the Dyckman Houses.

The neighborhood remained relatively rural until the early 20th century, when subways were built to connect it to the rest of the city and new construction began to flourish. Irish laborers were brought in to build apartment houses, which they moved into. The Irish were followed by a wave of Jewish immigrants fleeing the dreary claustrophobia of the Lower East Side, and a small enclave of Greeks (including John Kambouris) came over from Kos, a tiny island 1/20th the size of Delaware, with a smaller population than that of Minot, North Dakota.

Inwood was pretty suburban until the late 1940s, when Robert Moses built the Dyckman Houses, a seven-building project on Tenth Avenue. This was also when two of the neighborhood's most famous residents were born: Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, who was born and raised in the Dyckman Houses and grew up to be the highest-scoring basketball player ever, and writer/famous junkie Jim Carroll, although he didn't move to Inwood until he was 15. His most famous book, *The Basketball Diaries*, is about being a dirtbag teen here, though pretty much any New York neighborhood worth its salt has inspired some kind of art about being a dirtbag teen.

By the '70s, many of the Irish, Jewish, and Greek families had left, following the pattern of white flight exhibited in much of the city, and the neighborhood was settled by a wave of newcomers from the Dominican Republic, many of whom remain today. During the '80s, Inwood was hit hard by the crack epidemic and all its accompanying violence and desolation—which brings us to 1986, when John Kambouris bought Pizza Palace from his buddy from the Old Country.

During the next two decades, John saw the pizzeria he had taken over as one of the few constants in the otherwise unstable urban terrain of Inwood. Many of the Dominican residents who had come to the neighborhood as kids during the 1970s had grown up eating the pizza there, and began to bring in their children to sample the slices. Today there are at least three generations in the neighborhood who have eaten at Johnny's, as the place is locally known.

I asked John's son, Nick, a jovial guy about my age who at the time was studying for his master's in education but still helping out around the pizza shop, what had compelled his father to stay when the bulk of the Greek community left for Queens and the Bronx. "Even though the people have changed, the neighborhood is still the same: a stepping-stone for recent immigrants," he told me. "Neighborhoods like this are important to the city, and our pizza shop ties the community that is here to the community that left. It gives people a reason to hold on to their identity. Inwood is a great place to keep your culture and traditions and learn what it means to be American at the same time."

This is why I love New York. The dense population and physical proximity to other humans from wildly disparate backgrounds forges bonds that would be hard to create elsewhere. Yet I often run into lifelong New Yorkers who seem to feel the exact opposite way. A couple of days ago, I was talking to a guy standing in line in front of me at a pizza parlor (another result of the close proximity of New Yorkers: People waiting in line together engage in light small talk), and he mentioned that he had grown up in Richmond Hill.

I said, "No shit! A bunch of my family lived there decades ago, and I've got a couple of friends who grew up there. Seems like an interesting neighborhood. It's mostly Caribbean and Indian these days, right?"

"Yeah," he said wistfully, shaking his head slowly back and forth and looking down at the counter. "It used to be Irish and Italian." He raised an eyebrow and looked at me as though I obviously understood and agreed with him that it should have stayed that way. What a nob!

My dad's family moved from Williamsburg, Brooklyn, to Rosedale, Queens, when he was still a kid. Rosedale is a suburban neighborhood just north of Kennedy Airport, right on the border of Queens and Long Island. When my dad was little, the neighborhood was mostly Jewish and Italian families like my father's—immigrant parents trying to inch their children out of the densely populated urban enclaves where they had initially settled, taking

one incremental step closer to realizing the suburban American dream of a white picket fence and a sprawling lawn. I spent a lot of Jewish holidays in Rosedale as a kid. My grandparents would take me to the park, and then we'd go to the Buttermill, a Jewish bakery that made the best mandel bread I've ever had, or to the Woodro delicatessen for knishes, pastrami sandwiches, and black cherry soda. My grandmother died when I was 13. When I was 19, my grandfather moved to Florida as part of the ongoing Great Jewish Migration.

But I still go to Rosedale at least once a year to visit my best friend's mother, Mrs. Watson, who came to New York from Jamaica 30 or 40 years ago. As I observed to the Pizza-Line Bozo about Richmond Hill, Rosedale seems predominantly Caribbean these days—mostly Jamaican and Haitian, I think. When I visit with Mrs. Watson, instead of knishes and black cherry soda we eat beef patties and drink sorrel punch, but the feelings of love are the same. The kvetching is the same, though in a different dialect. The sense of pride in being able to own a home in a nice neighborhood is the same.

I began visiting Mrs. Watson a few years after my grandfather moved out of Queens. Returning to Rosedale, seeing the same landscape populated by different people, always seemed so beautiful to me. That a geographic location could serve the same function for multiple immigrant communities in succession always seemed like a tiny victory in a city full of tragedy. So when people like that shmuck at the pizza shop spew their xenophobic nostalgia, it really galls me. Part of me wanted to shout at the guy, but part of me wanted to talk to him nicely.

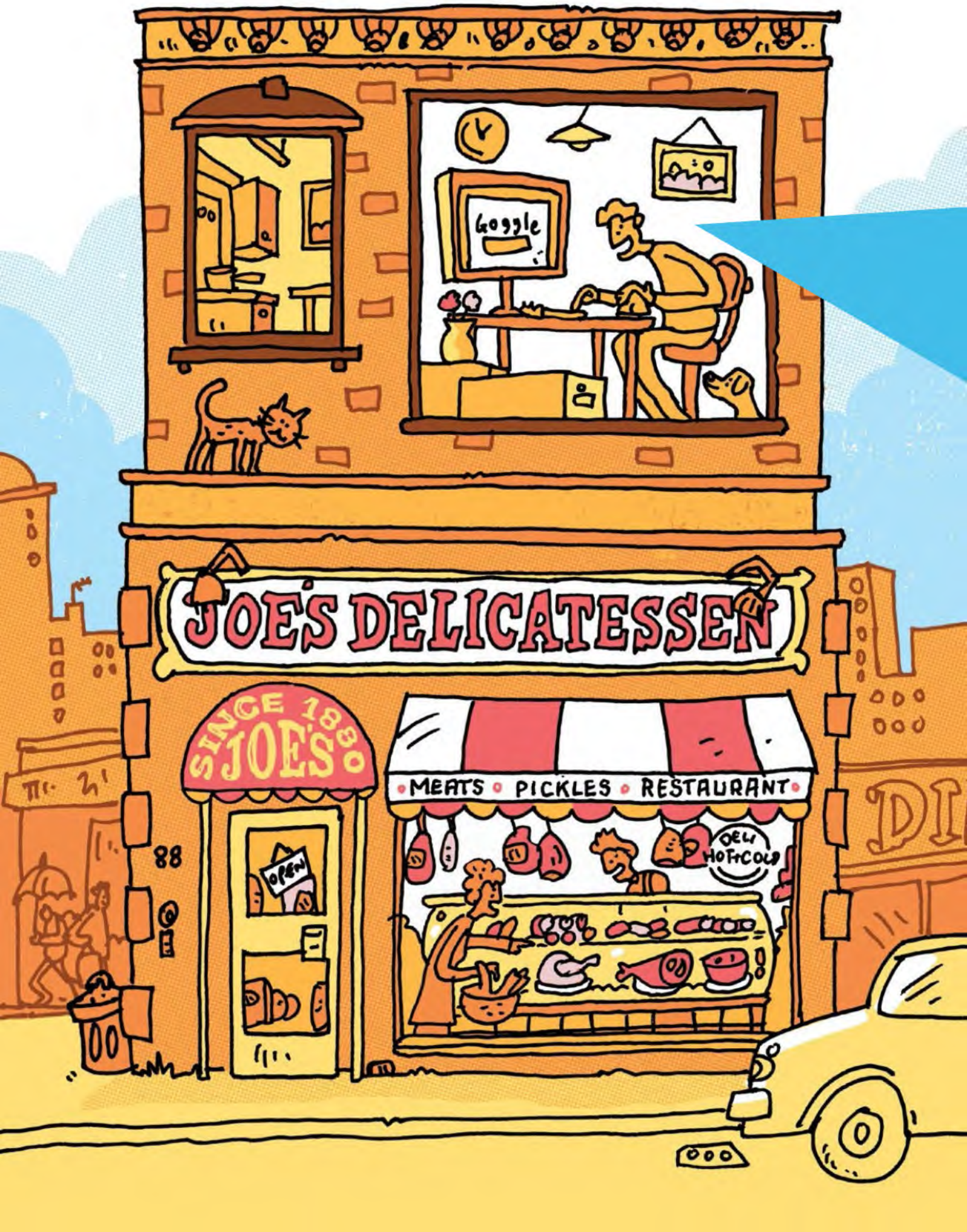
In his two-part essay "Times Square Red, Times Square Blue," Samuel Delany—Bronx native, award-winning science fiction writer, preeminent documentarian of cruising culture in New York City, my favorite author—writes that within the now nearly eradicated cruising scene in the porno theaters of Times Square, he saw more "cross-class contact" than in any other type of space in New York City. I would say that the ideal pizzeria shares this quality—though perhaps to a lesser extent—and that these characteristics are embodied perfectly by the scene at Pizza Palace on Dyckman Avenue. Here we have first, second, and third generations from a handful of different nations preparing and eating food together: young mothers gossiping in Spanish with their strollers parked at the edge of the table; less-affluent Columbia students who can't afford the rents in Morningside Heights so settled in Inwood; seemingly ageless neighborhood junkies who could be a world-worn 30 or a pickled, preserved 70; young seminary students on their way back from visiting the Cloisters—all have a slice waiting for them.

MANY OF THE RESIDENTS WHO HAD COME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD AS KIDS BEGAN TO BRING IN THEIR CHILDREN TO SAMPLE SLICES.

In the midst of it all is John Kambouris, standing in the back room at his 60-year-old industrial mixer, making the dough for tomorrow's pies. In the two hours I sat at Palace Pizza during my last visit, nearly everyone who came in took a moment to wave at John, and he addressed most of them by name. And the community spirit emanating from Pizza Palace traverses not only ethnic boundaries but national borders as well. The week I ate my last slice in Manhattan (two and a half years after the day I stepped into Johnny's), I was written up in a couple of local papers, one of which published a list of my five favorite pizza parlors, Pizza Palace among them. A week later I was doing a vanity google (that's when you type your own name into Google—don't try to pretend you haven't done it) when I found a result written in the Greek alphabet. I sent it to a high school friend who reads Greek, and he informed me that the article was about Pizza Palace making my top five. The local paper from John's home island was so proud that one of their own had been awarded such a hefty distinction they had chosen to write a human-interest piece about it.

John's success as a pizza man didn't impact only the residents of his neighborhood, who routinely have their bellies warmed by his wonderful food. His influence spreads farther even than the Inwood diaspora, some of whom stop at "Johnny's" on Dyckman first thing after landing in New York, before seeing their own families. No, the ripples of John's labor and dedication to his neighborhood and his craft reached all the way across the Atlantic to the remote Greek island where he was born. Because John Kambouris doesn't just own a warm and inviting establishment—no easy task in itself. That's chump stuff compared to John's other skill: making damn good pizza.

Excerpted from *Slice Harvester* by Colin Atrophy Hagendorf. Copyright © 2015 by Colin Hagendorf. Reprinted with permission of Simon & Schuster. All rights reserved.


Goggle
JOE'S DELICATESSEN
SINCE 1880
JOE'S
OPEN
MEATS • PICKLES • RESTAURANT
DELI HOT+COLD
88

How the Sausage (LITERALLY) Gets Made

Our intrepid reporter journeys to a factory in North Philadelphia to discover the meaty truth.

BY **NICK GREENE**
ILLUSTRATIONS BY **ANDY SMITH**

I grew up in an apartment building that had, in its basement, a small grocery with a deli.

That's where my food came from, and little has changed. Now, decades later, I live above a butcher shop. For centuries, this kind of access to food was reserved for royalty, and even monarchs couldn't always count on it. I can. I've gone through life at the top of the food chain, not due to any dominant physical or intellectual traits, but because I was born at a specific time in history, a time that's seen thousands of factories and plants occupy countless acres of land. Armies of people are employed to produce food that sustains me. And I don't have to think about any of it.

Would that change if I learned more about the journey my food takes to reach me? To find out, I arranged a tour of Dietz & Watson's sausage and deli meats factory in North Philadelphia. Before I embarked, I turned to Wikipedia, where I discovered a sentence I have to relay, even if it means admitting I looked up "sausage" on Wikipedia before writing an article about sausage. In the "History" section, it reads: "Sausage making is a logical outcome of efficient butchery."

This sentence itself is like a sausage: The whole is much more elegant than the individual words. To fully understand its meaning, you must work backward, which, it turns out, is exactly how you tour a sausage factory—in reverse. It's from that perspective that I came to look at my meals a little differently.

1. A Taste of Things to Come

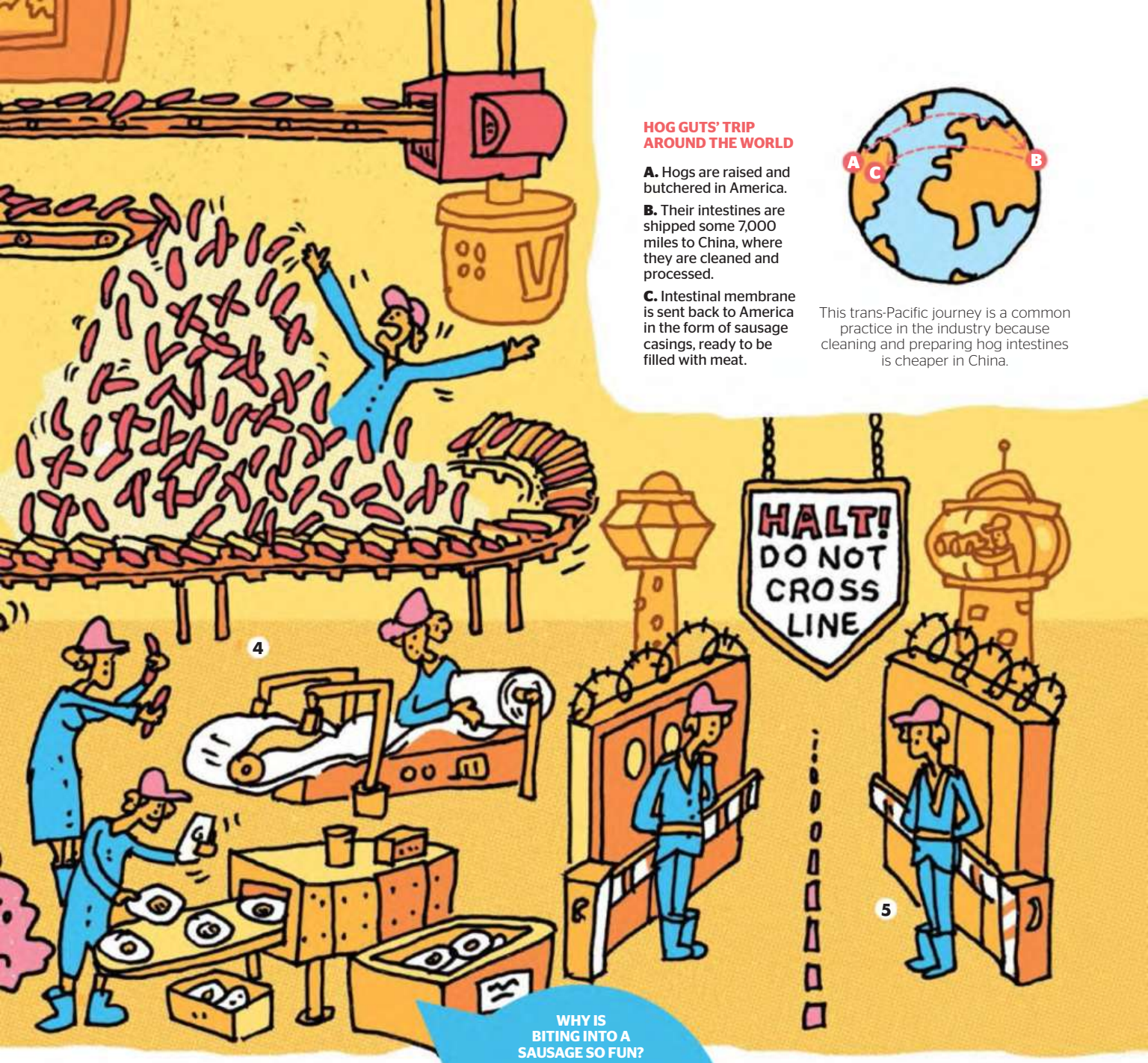
I begin my day at Dietz & Watson at 11:15 a.m., eating cooked sausages in a cafeteria with employees who are on their lunch breaks. The sausages are arranged on a kitchen island alongside a handwritten key listing each product name and serial number. They are fresh off the production line, which sits in a factory beside the Delaware River. The chef for the day is Larry, a warehouse manager who has prepared a homemade kimchi sauerkraut as an accompaniment. And while nothing I say about Dietz & Watson should be mistaken as a breach of journalistic objectivity, I admit that both the kimchi and the sausages were delicious.

2. Dressing the Part

The reason you tour a sausage factory backward is to avoid cross-contamination—cleanliness is a theme here. In fact, the U.S. Department of Agriculture lauds this factory's superlative hygiene. I don thick rubber boots, a knee-length blue lab coat, a hairnet, and a pink helmet. Entering the plant, I walk through a contraption that resembles a stainless steel horseshoe propped upright. On the floor is a grate that, when stepped upon, soaks my boot soles in an antibacterial bath while waist-high troughs on both sides spray sanitizing solution at my hands. You walk through the device like a basketball player receiving high fives during pregame introductions.

3. Don't Eat the Foam!

Antibacterial foam coats the floor throughout the plant; every few minutes a new batch spews from pipes in the walls. The foam kills listeria, a foodborne pathogen that can live in cold environments. "You could eat that foam," a marketing executive told me, prompting another company representative to chime in with a noncommittal "I wouldn't say that." (While the foam is nontoxic and theoretically safe to eat, slurping the stuff off the floor is probably not the best idea.) The factory is kept at 28°F, and I'm given a sweatshirt. The plant smells surprisingly pleasant, like the burp from a vacuum-sealed package of bologna after it's first opened.



HOG GUTS' TRIP AROUND THE WORLD

A. Hogs are raised and butchered in America.

B. Their intestines are shipped some 7,000 miles to China, where they are cleaned and processed.

C. Intestinal membrane is sent back to America in the form of sausage casings, ready to be filled with meat.

This trans-Pacific journey is a common practice in the industry because cleaning and preparing hog intestines is cheaper in China.

WHY IS BITING INTO A SAUSAGE SO FUN?
That glorious sausage snap comes from the natural casing, which is made of intestinal membrane. "We like things that are resistant on the outside, soft on the inside," explains neuroscientist David J. Linden. "What are the biological roots of this? Maybe it has to do with fruit that's not rotten." In other words, perhaps you find the sensation pleasant because it saved your ancestors' lives.

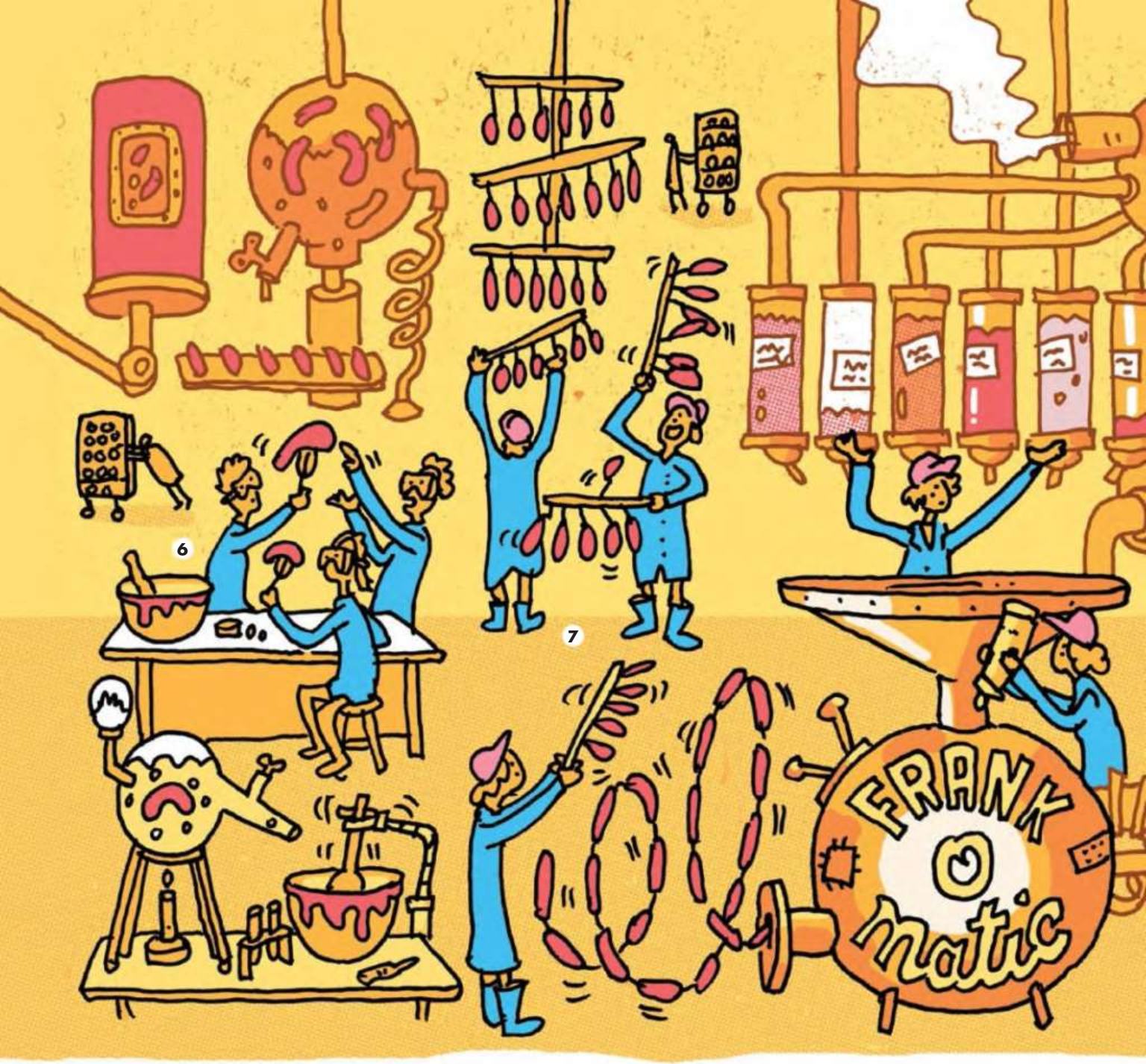
4. Sealed and Delivered

At the end of the line, a machine packages hot dogs. Wieners cascade down like lemmings over a cliff, raining onto a spotless track that collates the meat into ready-to-seal rows. If order and symmetry make you giddy, trust me, it's a glorious sight. The bottom section of the machine unfurls a sheet of plastic, which runs underneath the track of hot dogs. The two sections—hot dogs and plastic—converge, getting vacuum-sealed into packs and then routed through a piano-sized apparatus that separates the packages into metronomically precise cuts. Along the way, employees ensure that the dogs go undamaged.

It becomes clear I won't be able to talk to the people operating the machines. Disrupting their concentration could ruin everything. Food courses through the factory in a steady stream, and one small delay or clog could reverberate up and down the line. Think "the butterfly effect," but with encased meats.

5. The Great Divide

The factory has two sides. There's the "ready-to-eat" side, where sausages that have been cooked to eliminate any contamination (at about 170°F for two hours apiece, usually) are then smoked and packaged. Then there's the side where raw product is handled. The dividing line between both sides is enforced like a demilitarized zone after a failed détente. Employees from each side are totally segregated, with separate locker rooms, cafeterias, and break areas to ensure that accidental interactions or cross-contamination is impossible. It's like a protein-packed version of *Romeo and Juliet.*



6. Frankfurter's Lab

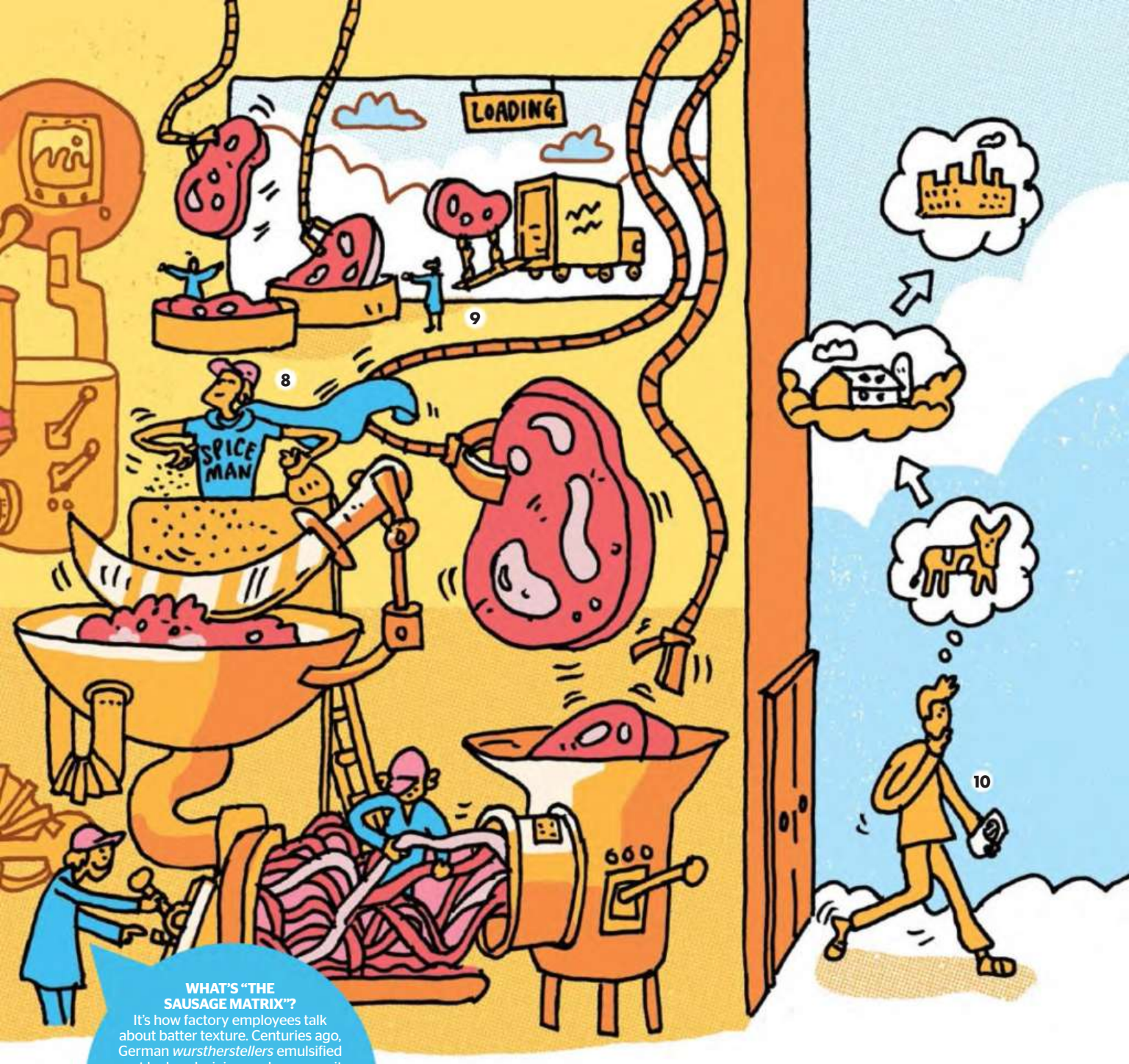
Moving from House Montague to House Capulet features a detour through the factory's micro lab. It looks like a hybrid of a college chemistry classroom and a suburban kitchen, and it's where quality control workers test the products, through both beaker-and-Bunsen-burner-type procedures and throwing-a-dog-between-a-bun-and-chowing-down methods of experimentation. It's also where scientists test the leanness and fattiness of the meat. The ideal balance for each type of sausage is reached by precisely blending different batches of fresh meat into batter.

7. Wait. "Sausage Batter"?

Yes, batter. In other words, precooked, emulsified meat. It faintly resembles pudding, and there are tubfuls of it in hues ranging from pearly white to tomato red. Hot dog batter, which I'm told is indistinguishable from bologna, is fed into something called the Frank-a-Matic, a machine that pumps the goop into cellulose casings. These are turned into linked sausages. The dogs spin out of a conchlike, stainless-steel skeleton into the hands of an employee who laces them onto a smoke stick, which is then loaded onto a smoke tree. A similar (but slower) process applies to naturally cased sausage.

8. Vinny, Man of Spice

To make batter, ground pork is fed into a German sausage machine—basically, a giant saucer with a curved knife. It slices the meat at up to 3,600 RPMs, breaking down proteins at a molecular level. A dash of salt is added and ice is thrown in to replace lost moisture. Finally, spices are mixed in. Spices are crucial—they're what makes andouille into andouille and chorizo into chorizo. And here the responsibility of mixing them falls upon one person: Vinny the Spice Man. Fellow employees talk about Vinny with reverence. Apparently, his encyclopedic knowledge of seasonings and knack for calculating ratios on the fly would put an anesthesiologist to



WHAT'S "THE SAUSAGE MATRIX"?
It's how factory employees talk about batter texture. Centuries ago, German *wurstherstellers* emulsified meat by hand, giving each sausage its own texture. High-tech machines can eliminate those variations, but modern sausage makers still strive for a unique "mouthfeel." So, they run emulsifying machines at different speeds and lengths of time for each type of sausage; the results lie across "the matrix."

shame. I didn't meet Vinny, which only added to his mystique, but I did visit his spice room, where huge bags of paprika and chile pepper were stacked on top of each other, filling the space with a dense smell. The spice room was the only part of the factory I visited that was completely quiet. With its cavernously high ceiling, it had a cathedral-like vibe.

9. Maker Meets Meat

The meat is the most important part of the sausage: the beginning (thus, the end) of the whole process. A combination of lean and fatty cuts is selected to get the right composition and fed into large industrial grinders. This meat, sourced and shipped fresh to the factory from farms around the Midwest, arrives as thick, well-marbled hunks that wouldn't look out of place in a butcher's display case. The major difference? Meat is ordered by the half-ton or so, and is hauled around the plant in Jacuzzi-sized tubs. If you're tracking food from animal to plate, food processing amounts to a mid-route detour, cooking scaled at stupefying proportions.

10. The Last Link

Wikipedia calls sausage making "efficient butchery" because traditionally it uses parts of the animal that might otherwise be scrapped. (We're talking about stuffed intestines here, after all.) But in this modern era of food processing, efficiency is taken to the next level. What once would have seemed completely illogical—some 187 million links made to exacting specifications from 27 million pounds of meat annually at this factory alone—has become the everyday. It's efficiency like this that ensures that, deserved or not, my place atop the food chain is secure.

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EINSTEIN'S PRODUCTIVITY SECRETS ›
R.L. STINE'S SCARY SUCCESS STORY ›
4 WAYS TO GET YOUR MUPPET FIX ›
+ OTHER STUFF WE LOVE RIGHT NOW ›

COURTESY MICKAEL JOU

Up in the Air

For Mickael Jou, levitating is the easy part. In his self-portrait series "Air Through My Ashes," the ballet dancer-turned-photographer captures himself mid-flight in everyday settings, from deserted grocery store aisles to malls, train platforms, and city sidewalks. After taking a desk job in Paris, the classically trained Jou missed dance so much he began performing in the streets on his days off. As he drew crowds—and amateur photographers—he realized he wanted to take control of the images others were capturing. So he took the leap, bought "a really expensive camera," and learned how to shoot himself while executing high-flying ballet moves. The stillness in Jou's face belies the work it takes to stay aloft. "When you're dancing, everything has to look effortless," he says. He's made that an art. **—REGAN HOFMANN**

Nerd Hero of the Month: *ALBERT EINSTEIN*

In 1915, Einstein completed his theory of general relativity and changed our understanding of gravity. Celebrate its centennial with his genius tricks for clearing your mind.

BUST OUT THE VIOLIN
"I know that the most joy in my life has come to me from my violin," Einstein said. His relationship with music wasn't always so cozy: Like any kid, he despised scales and drills. (Unlike other kids, he threw a chair at his music teacher.)

SET SAIL
Einstein named his sailboat *Tinef*, Yiddish for "worthless"—a fitting name, because he was a terrible sailor. He didn't know how to swim, and capsized his boat so often that locals regularly towed him back to shore.

DRESS DOWN
Einstein's "relaxed" look included an undershirt, baggy pants, a rope for a belt, and sandals. He hated socks. "When I was young I found out that the big toe always ends up making a hole in a sock. So I stopped wearing socks."

KEEP UP CORRESPONDENCE
Einstein loved answering fan mail from kids. When a girl complained about her problems in math, he wrote back, "Do not worry about your difficulty in mathematics. I can assure you mine are still greater."

THE PAPER TRAIL

Our favorite reads right now

BRAIN CANDY → BRAIN KALE

Fantastic Cities
by Steve McDonald
(Chronicle Books, $14.95)

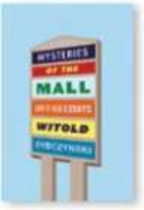
In this adult coloring book, McDonald recreates cities ranging from New York to Istanbul in exacting, mesmerizing detail. All you have to do is fill in between the lines to give a little luster to your wanderlust.

Pop Sonnets
by Erik Didriksen
(Quirk Books, $13.95)

These clever Shakespearean spins on pop songs like Carly Rae Jepsen's "Call Me Maybe" and Jay Z's "99 Problems" include lines like "Perchance to call upon me soon, I pray!" and "Four score and nineteen problems I possess."

Chilled
by Tom Jackson
(Bloomsbury USA, $27)

Do you know what goes on in your fridge? In this meticulous account of how we learned to keep things cold, Jackson explores the ice pits of Persia and CERN's bubble chamber. Turns out, the science of maintaining your leftovers also helped discover the Higgs boson.



Mysteries of the Mall
by Witold Rybczynski
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $27)

In this architectural investigation, Rybczynski recounts how Frank Lloyd Wright got so famous, and shares some gossip, too: Frederick Law Olmsted loathed flower beds!

Prince of Darkness
by Shane White
(St. Martin's Press, $27.99)

A decade before the Civil War, Jeremiah G. Hamilton rose to prominence as a ruthless Wall Street broker. When he died, he was New York's only black millionaire, owning a mansion and railroad stock in trains he couldn't legally ride.

Early viewers found Fozzie the Bear's failed comedian act too sad, so he got a makeover.

Pop Culture Syllabus: *MUPPETS*

UNDER THE FEATHERS

For 46 years, Caroll Spinney has played Big Bird (and Oscar the Grouch) on *Sesame Street,* one year longer than Muppet creator Jim Henson performed as Kermit the Frog. At 80, Spinney is still going strong. He'd have to be: His bird suit weighs 14 pounds, and he must hold up the 4-pound head with his right hand while navigating the set via a monitor strapped to his chest. In a new documentary, Spinney shares some of the most incredible stories from his decades as America's favorite flightless bird, like the time he almost joined the doomed Challenger mission to boost interest in space travel. Fortunately for kids everywhere, NASA changed its mind at the last minute—and Big Bird stayed earthbound.

WATCH *I Am Big Bird: The Carroll Spinney Story* (on demand: iTunes, Amazon, Google Play)

THEN AND NOW

At just 18, Jim Henson got his first TV show. Featuring an early version of Kermit the Frog, *Sam and Friends* ran for six years and launched the puppet juggernaut that would become the Muppets (contrary to popular belief, their name isn't a portmanteau of "marionette" and "puppet"—Henson said he just liked the way it sounded). After 60 years, nine feature films, and 10 television series, the Muppets are being honored in a brand-new museum exhibit. With a massive donation of more than 500 items from Henson's estate, including iconic Muppets like Kermit, the Swedish Chef, and Bert and Ernie (as well as storyboards, sketches, and costumes), this is the largest collection of Muppetry available to the public.

VISIT "Jim Henson: The Exhibit," Museum of the Moving Image, Queens, New York

WATCH *The Muppets* (a rebooted version for adults), premiering September 22 on ABC

MAD MAN

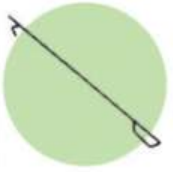
Jim Henson was more than a puppeteer, he was also a savvy ad man (and an experimental filmmaker—his short film *Time Piece*, in which he also starred, was nominated for an Oscar in 1966). In 1957, while still in college, he created a pair of proto-Muppets to star in a series of 10-second commercials for a local D.C. coffee brand called Wilkins. The warring characters, named Wilkins and Wontkins, became such a hit he was asked to reuse them for other campaigns across the country—not just for other coffee brands, but for Taystee Bread, Sohio gas stations, and Detroit's favorite soda, Faygo. A full reel of Henson's ad work is available on the Henson Company's YouTube channel, along with that trippy Oscar film.

WATCH Red Book Playlist on the Jim Henson Company's YouTube channel

SCIENTISTS Described by *CAMPING EQUIPMENT*

SCIENTIST	EQUIPMENT
George Washington Carver	Swiss Army Knife

If you have the right mind-set, even the simplest items can prove versatile. (*You* try developing 300 uses for the humble peanut!)

Marie Curie	 Campfire Poker

Science experiments are risky. If you don't keep a safe distance, you'll eventually face the pain. (Or turn radioactive.)

Johannes Kepler	Hammock

In a hammock, you become intensely aware that, with one slight move, you'll better understand the laws of gravity.

Rosalind Franklin	Lantern

Trailblazers don't always get the credit they deserve, but without them, we'd be left in the dark.

ALAMY (EINSTEIN, MUPPETS, CARVER, CURIE, FRANKLIN). ISTOCK (KEPLER, KNIFE, LANTERN). COURTESY OF KAMMOK (HAMMOCK)

Jack Black plays R.L. Stine in the *Goosebumps* movie, in theaters October 16. (Also, watch for a cameo from Stine himself.)

R.L. Stine, Master of Fear

THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR[1] YOU READ AS A KID ON HOW HE'S MADE SCARY STORIES HIS LIFE'S WORK

AS TOLD TO JEN DOLL

All I ever wanted to be was a writer. I started when I was 9. I'd be in my room writing little joke magazines, and I would bring them to school. I was a shy, fearful kid, and it was my way of getting attention. People always ask, "Did you have any teachers who encouraged you?" and the right answer is, "Yes, I did." But I didn't. They begged me to stop!

These days, I read the paper and get to work at about 9:30 every morning in my apartment. It's the world's best commute. I write 2,000 words and usually finish by 2:30 p.m. I walk the dog, go to the gym, and take a nap. That's it. It's a full life.

The challenge is coming up with new ideas. I've done every scary thing you can possibly do. I met Stephen King at the Edgar Awards and he said, "You've taken every single amusement park plot and haven't left any for anyone else."

I'm lucky. When I need a new idea, I get one. But it's mysterious to me. People say, "R.L. Stine has the formula." I wish I knew the formula. I don't think there is one.

About every *Goosebumps* book has to take place in some kid's backyard, or the kitchen, or the basement. It's scarier for kids if it starts in their own house or neighborhood. Some writers make a mistake; they want to do something creepy, so they pick a huge dark castle in Europe, but kids don't relate to that.

I don't get scared. I watched this horror movie, *It Follows*. It just made me laugh; they all do. I think horror is funny. That's the combination kids like: books that are funny and scary at the same time, but not too scary.

I don't read much horror. A few Stephen King books are absolutely brilliant. I think *Misery* is the best book ever written about writers and editors. *Pet Sematary*, I've stolen that plot about six times. I had to—it's just so good.

Planning a book is the only time I get stuck. I can do a *Goosebumps* outline, which is 25 to 30 chapters, in three or four days. But if it's not going well, it might take me two weeks. My editor is my wife, Jane, and I never get a book through without revising. It's the main thing we fight about—plots.

In the early days, Jane and I collaborated on funny books for kids. But we work so differently. I go in order, starting in the beginning, and Jane would write something in the middle, then write an ending, then go back. We fought about it, and she locked me in a closet and left the apartment. Then we decided not to collaborate.

[1] Of the *Goosebumps* series (which has more than 350 million English-language books in print) and the recently revived, wildly popular *Fear Street* series

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HOPPER STONE, SMPSP (GOOSEBUMPS FILM). ALAMY (STINE)

After college, I went to New York and worked for a year on a soft drink magazine, and then I became assistant editor of Junior Scholastic. It was 1968. I wrote history and geography articles and news stories, and then they gave me my own magazine, *Search*. It was a history-current affairs magazine for junior high kids, but written at a fifth-grade level. That's how I learned about reading levels. I learned all the vocabulary lists for fourth and fifth grade, and that's how I keep *Goosebumps* easy to read.

I did that for four years, and then we did *Bananas*, which was my life's goal: my own humor magazine. I was 30, I did it for 10 years, and I had the best time. When the magazine folded, I thought, "God, I'm never going to shave again, never get dressed."

I was doing everything just to make a living. I was writing *Bazooka Joe* comics and jokes for bubble gum. I did *Rocky and Bullwinkle* and *Mighty Mouse* coloring books. That was a great job because it's one sentence per page.

Then, I was having lunch with Jean Feiwel, the editorial director at Scholastic at the time. She'd just had a fight with a YA horror writer and said, "I'm never working with him again. You could write a good teen horror novel. How about it?" I hadn't read any teen horror novels, but I didn't say no to anything in those days. I ran to the bookstore and bought a bunch of horror books.

***Fear Street* sold like crazy:** 80 million books. Jane's business partner at Parachute Press, Joan, said, "Let's try to do middle-grade horror for 7- to 12-year-olds." I refused. But she kept after me. I finally agreed that if I could think of a good name, I'd write a few books. Well, I was reading *TV Guide*, and there was an ad on the bottom of the page that said, "It's Goosebumps Week on channel 11." The name was just staring at me!

I recently went back to writing *Fear Street*, and the new one [out September 29] is the best. It's called *The Lost Girl*. It has the most gruesome scene I've ever written. It's disgusting. It involves horses eating a man. I should be ashamed, but I'm so proud of that scene.

I think I'm totally normal, don't you? Horror guys aren't sick at all.

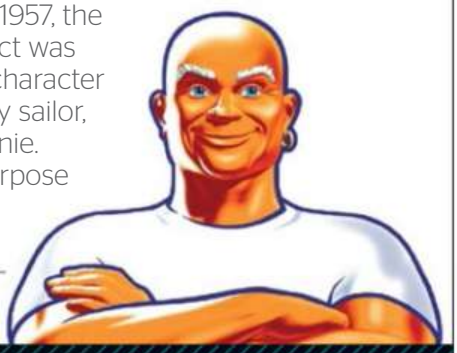
This interview has been condensed and edited.

October 14th
BE BALD AND FREE DAY

HOT DATE!

THE BALD FACTS

The first Mr. Clean[1] appeared in 1957, the same year his namesake product was sold to Procter & Gamble. The character was actually modeled on a Navy sailor, not a magic, house-cleaning genie. And for good reason: The all-purpose cleaning solution was originally used to clean ships.



[1]In Spain, his name is "Don Limpio."

SPEED READ

If you read just seven tidbits about vintage communication techniques this month ...

Phone Booth, by Ariana Kelly, Bloomsbury Object Lessons series ($14.99)

Thomas Watson made the first booth when speaking to Alexander Graham Bell, improvising an enclosure with blankets and a barrel hoop.

An 1883 booth patent featured screened windows, a ventilator, and a small desk.

In 1929, the mayor of Philadelphia removed all phone booths from the city hall because too many employees were using them to place bets on horse races.

In *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure,* time travel occurs via phone booth. The director had planned to use a car but was worried about copying *Back to the Future.*

Between 1997 and 1999, just as cell phones were becoming more common, there was a surge in pay phone usage. No one knows why.

A regular at the Beverly Hills Hotel in the 1940s, an increasingly paranoid Howard Hughes didn't want to go through the hotel operator and insisted a phone booth be installed in his suite.

In Japan, a group of abandoned phone booths were repurposed as goldfish aquariums and installed around the city of Osaka in 2011.

BY LUCAS ADAMS

NAME: _____ AGE: ____

IMAGINARY FRIEND'S NAME: _____

1 Which is not a real pet beauty contest?

- A All-American Glamour Kitty
- B Haute Dogs' Chihuahua Beauty Contest
- C Fluffy Bunny Challenge
- D The Miss Cuy Guinea Pig Contest

2 After his presidency, George W. Bush took up painting. Which member of his administration also picked up the brush?
- A Paul Bremer III
- B Alberto Gonzales
- C Condoleezza Rice
- D Donald Rumsfeld

3 Which TV channel partners with the Fulbright Program?
- A MTV
- B A&E
- C Lifetime
- D Spike

4 Which hue won the Crayola Color Census 2000?
- A Raw Sienna
- B Blue
- C Jazzberry Jam
- D Fuzzy Wuzzy

5 Which show has Stephen Hawking not guest-starred on?

- A *Star Trek: The Next Generation*

- B *Futurama*

- C *The Big Bang Theory*

- D *ALF*

6 Which president did Sam Houston call "a victim of the use of water as a beverage"?
- A James Polk
- B Andrew Jackson
- C Martin Van Buren
- D Zachary Taylor

7 What's a coffin bone?
- A A bone in a horse's hoof
- B A joint for woodworking
- C A commonly choked-on chicken bone
- D A ship's rudder

8 Elena Cornaro Piscopia was the first woman to do what at a university?
- A Join a fraternity
- B Teach
- C Earn a doctoral degree
- D Get tenure

9 In 1979, singer Fela Kuti announced he'd run for president of Nigeria on the ticket of his own party. What was it called?
- A MOP
- B SCRUB
- C BROOM
- D SOAP

10 Which U.S. state was not a sovereign nation?
- A Delaware
- B Vermont
- C California
- D Hawaii

11 Belleville, Detroit, is the home of what musical genre?
- A Techno
- B House
- C Doo-wop
- D Smooth jazz

12 Pepsi was originally called _____.
- A Pep-in-a-Can
- B PopPop
- C Squizz
- D Brad's Drink

13 Which NASA mission failed because a team didn't convert English units to the metric system?
- A Mars Climate Orbiter
- B Space-Based Infrared System
- C Helios
- D The Orbiting Carbon Observatory Satellite

14 What's an unused highway called?
- A A butt
- B A road to nowhere
- C An asphalt graveyard
- D A stub

15 Which British politician supposedly called the Magna Carta the "Magna Farta"?
- A Elizabeth I
- B Winston Churchill
- C Oliver Cromwell
- D David Cameron

ANSWERS

1. C
2. A (Bremer paints landscapes, mostly of rural Vermont.)
3. A (The digital cable channel mtvU supports projects that use "popular music as a cultural force for expression or change.")
4. B
5. D
6. A (This was an insult—Polk had a reputation for being introverted and humorless.)
7. A
8. C (She received her doctorate in philosophy from the University of Padua in 1678.)
9. A
10. A
11. A (Teenage friends Derrick May, Juan Atkins, and Kevin Saunderson—the "Bellville Three"—went to high school together and created electronic dance tracks that pioneered the movement.)
12. D
13. A
14. D
15. C

Your Score!

- **0-4** Pretty Good
- **5-7** The Best
- **8-9** The Worst
- **10-15** Also Pretty Good

ALAMY

mental_floss TRIVIA SHOW

2015 TOUR

NEW YORK CITY | CHICAGO | SAN FRANCISCO

For the second consecutive year, *mental_floss* hit the road to find out who's got game.

Founders Will and Mangesh brought out their toughest questions for this ultimate battle of the brains, where Floss fans go head to head and only one team walks away with the title of biggest knowledge junkies. During stops in NYC, Chicago, San Francisco, and VidCon, contestants were put to the test with topics like *Altered States, Pop Culture Spelling Bee,* and *Who's on the Left,* with all event proceeds being donated to Project for Awesome.

Guests enjoyed tons of fabulously flossy prizes, and surprise guests like Pat Kiernan of NY1, The Brain Scoop's Emily Graslie, and *mental_floss*'s Craig Benzine.

Thanks to everyone for coming out and stay tuned for upcoming show dates!

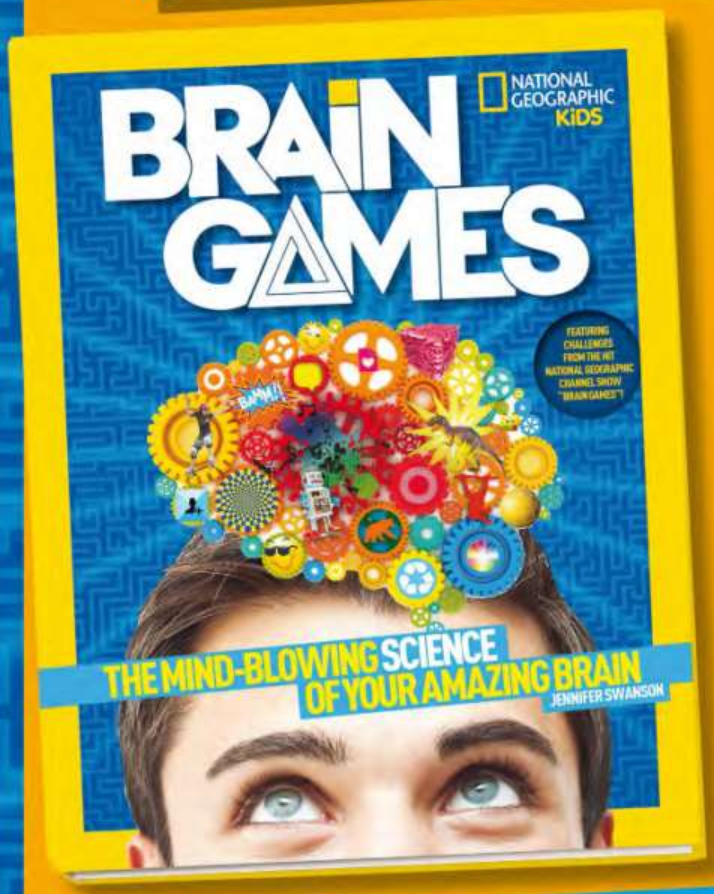
(FROM LEFT) NYC winners from Universal McCann: Lily Matathia, Ian Ritter, Lisa Cao, Caileen Machard with *mental_floss*'s Abby Sharpe & Will Pearson

1,006 WORDS

SEA CUCUMBERS EAT WITH THEIR FEET.

ALAMY

IT'S THE THOUGHTS THAT COUNT!


BRAIN GAMES
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC KIDS
FEATURING CHALLENGES FROM THE HIT NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL SHOW "BRAIN GAMES"!
THE MIND-BLOWING SCIENCE OF YOUR AMAZING BRAIN
JENNIFER SWANSON

The human brain processes tens of thousands of thoughts a day! And that's not all. Memory, mood, stress, logic, decision-making . . . there's a lot happening in that three-pound blob of gray matter between our ears! In this mind-blowing book, kids will learn how their brain works, challenge themselves with creative games, and delve into the fascinating world of neuroscience.

FEATURING CHALLENGES FROM THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL HIT BRAIN GAMES.

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WHO WE ARE IS WHAT WE LEAVE BEHIND.

It's been said our lives, our legacies, are simply the sum total of all the choices we make. Theodore Roosevelt certainly understood this when, in 1906, he fought the conventional wisdom of his time and set aside millions of acres of land to be preserved for future generations. And it's something Subaru understood when, over a decade ago, we became the first U.S. auto manufacturer to achieve zero landfill, with all waste recycled or turned into electricity. It wasn't easy. Doing the right thing rarely is. But like President Roosevelt, we made a commitment to something we believe in: the future. It's this promise that now leads us to share our expertise with the National Park Service as we work together toward the goal of making our irreplaceable national treasures zero landfill as well. Because loving the earth means understanding you can't throw anything away, because there simply is no "away."

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